



How Strategic and Authentic is Our Diversity; A Call for Confession, Reflection and Healing Action

As adopted by more than a two-thirds vote (855-13) by the fifteenth triennial Churchwide Assembly on August 9, 2019 at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Executive Summary from Task Force for Strategic Authentic Diversity

Since its inception, this church has wrestled with the challenge of becoming an authentically multiethnic, multicultural church. The vision and promised “**kindom**” and reign of God lie within us. The transformative power for being God’s change agent in society is intricately bound to our own transformation as God’s people.

For the task force participants who created this report, the conversations, prayers, and reflections that informed the work were deeply personal and, at times, extremely painful. In many ways these conversations, prayers, and reflections have modeled the struggle toward authenticity in ethnic diversity that is both a challenge and an opportunity for this church in all its expressions.

The report calls not for a brand-new strategic plan but for this church, in faith and with integrity, to “go deeper.” It seeks:

- **Theological Framing and Equipping** that more broadly reflect the wide ethnic diversity of who we are, have been, and are yet becoming. Our church must dig deeper into the history and emerging theology that ground, clarify, and justify our call and continuing commitment to ethnic diversity and inclusion.
- **Healing Action** to address the personal woundedness perpetuated by racism and racial prejudice. Deeper diagnosis of the collective, structural, and systemic nature of these sins will give us the opportunity for deeper prescriptive action toward healing.
- **Structural Accountability** to deepen the intentional focus of ELCA policies, governance, related structures, agencies, and organizations, so that they might serve the goals and initiatives of an authentically diverse church in society.
- **Theological Education and Leadership Development** that, drawing on the aforementioned theological framing, equip leadership for a “*metanoia movement*,” a change of hearts and minds about the violent sin of racism and the value of diversity, equitable inclusivity, and racial justice.
- **Partnerships With Full Communion, Ecumenical and Interreligious Partners, and Related Organizations** that deepen our shared commitment and struggle toward authentic diversity and inclusion in our systems, structures, and organizations.

The task force has discerned a call to engage these opportunities more fully, deepening our work, our journey, and our joy as our church moves toward **Strategically Authentic Diversity**.

In the report’s final section, the task force lifts up **Recommendations** to be embodied in the life of the ELCA. A number of these are not new, but they warrant new attention, resources, and energy to be implemented.

The 2016 Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution to create a task force composed entirely of persons of color from regions and synods across the country, so that the views and voices of this church so often unheard or unheeded might benefit the whole church. We have this ministry together.

The spirit and intent of the document are to help us transcend the paralysis of guilt and blaming and reach a shared accountability and honest relational engagement in the body of Christ.

Future Directions 2025 calls for a more equitable investment in the gifts and passions of people of color; those gifts are reflected in the vitality and leadership of the task force and this document.

Mindful of the marginalization that is evident throughout this church and society, the task force tried to be faithful to the work of naming and addressing with its recommendations, so that they might contribute to this church’s ongoing challenge to formulate its own goals and expectations for racial diversity and inclusion.

Background Summary

At the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, voting members considered a proposal to delete from the ELCA constitution language directing that 10 percent of the members of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units be people of color or whose primary language is other than English.¹ In response to the proposal, a resolution was presented to the assembly and adopted to create a Task Force for Strategic Authentic Diversity composed entirely of people of color (African Descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Arab and Middle Eastern, Latino) and inclusive of immigrant and LGBTQIA+ identities.

This task force listened to stories from across the ELCA and, mindful of working constructively with white allies within the church, consulted with the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice (EDLARJ). Throughout its work, the task force learned that the commitment and work of developing strategies for Multicultural Ministries has been done and continues to be happening in the church, though not always in full view or with public accountability. Drawing upon the Multicultural Ministry Strategy document “A Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel” (1991), the subsequent “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel” (1997), and the recommendations of the 2016 Multicultural Summit, the task force believes the time has come for the ELCA to live even more intentionally into what God calls us to be together.

Sharing collective wisdom and reviewing historical documents, the task force has come to a consensus on the following statement and recommendations. This document will offer the task force’s working definition of authentic diversity, provide a theological frame for the discussion, name the need for healing, address the question of structural accountability, examine our theological education and leadership development, and reflect upon our relationships with full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners and their related agencies. Finally, it will propose a set of recommendations in each of these areas.

Authentic Diversity

The manifold communities of the ELCA are called to exhibit *authentic diversity*— demographically matching the ethnic and racial composition of their respective contexts, as stated in the ELCA constitution (5.01.A16). They are likewise called to recognize that race and ethnicity intersect with other marginalizing traits (including gender, sexuality, and ability) and that people in these groups are also vulnerable.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a predominantly white, middle-class church, most of whose members are of European descent. Intentional outreach efforts have increased the proportion of nonwhite members (African Descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, Arab and Middle Eastern, and Latino) from 2 percent to 7.3 percent.² Yet this proportional increase coincides with a membership decline in white communities and congregations. Despite the ELCA’s numerous multicultural efforts, there is still a lack of authentic diversity in all its expressions. Racism exists within the ELCA, boldly and outwardly as well as subtly and inwardly. White privilege is systemic and persistent. The problem calls for a radical, systemic change in accordance with the proclamation of the gospel. The ELCA recognizes the perpetuation of racism still exists within the denomination despite personal good intentions. Yet, the systemic and structural ambiguity toward the elimination of racism continues.

In faithfulness to the biblical mandate to proclaim the gospel³ requires us to foster greater equity, fairness, and justice at all levels of the ELCA to ensure authentic diversity. The ELCA recognizes that such diversity is not reflected across all three expressions of this church. The dominant center of power and privilege still resides with people of European descent and their culture, while people of color and/or whose primary language is other than English remain at the margins, along with their cultures and identities. This problem is compounded by the cross-cutting issues of gender, sexuality, and ability. As a result, we have not been able to fully partner with God in turning the ELCA into the just, inclusive, and authentically diverse community described in the priority area for action under goal one of Future Directions 2025, where the ELCA is called to “develop a deep and shared understanding of who we are as a Lutheran church and equip leaders and all the baptized to communicate our theology and beliefs in accessible and compelling ways.”⁴ We have failed to realize our vision of a church that welcomes all people regardless of race, background, status, ability, family situation, and numerous other

¹ 5.01.B87., Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2013 ed. (Chicago: ELCA, 2013), pg. 25.

² “Statistical Review of the Ethnic Specific Ministry Participation,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, February 2016.

³ “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997.

⁴ “[Future Directions: Goal One](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

identifiers.⁵ The ELCA continues to be the whitest denomination in the U.S.

In a country where 39 percent of the population are people of color, only structural and systemic reinforcement can account for the glaring whiteness of our church. Thus, the work of this task force is rooted not in charity or pity but in resistance to tokenism and the nominal representation of cultures in ELCA structures. We work toward seeing a fuller glimpse of God’s image and the fullness of God’s creation. In addressing the need for authentic diversity within the ELCA, we strive for what the Holy Spirit created in the Pentecost moment: the fullness of God’s diversity and creativity existing simultaneously in space and time.

We condemn any form of discrimination or harassment based on color, gender, race, ethnicity, social or socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender expression, or physical or intellectual (mental) ability. We propose a *metanoia* (a change of heart and mind) to dismantle structures of discrimination. We yearn to promote systemic and structural strategies to establish and ensure authentic diversity.

Theological Framework: Why Strategic Authentic Diversity?⁶

In Mark 12:31, as part of the Great Commandment, Jesus tells the disciples, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Our baptismal covenant reminds us that “We will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, we will strive for justice and peace among all peoples and respect the dignity of every human being.”

Therefore, we seek authentic diversity not as an option but in obedience to the Great Commandment, in affirmation of our baptismal promise, in proclamation of the gospel, and toward the restoration of God’s beloved community from the brokenness we have created. The need for this authentic diversity, tied to incarnational identity and a Lutheran theological framework, is expressed in goal two of Future Directions 2025, which in part aims to “form and equip the baptized to express their faith through their life and witness as followers of Jesus.”⁷ Part of this expression of faith is to acknowledge our identities as both saints and sinners when we address the realities of authentic diversity within the ELCA.

As proclaimed in our confessions, we have marred the body of Christ and the household of faith⁸ through what we have done and have left undone. The sin of racism, like all sin, causes brokenness, so no one should be surprised that this sinfulness is manifested in the ELCA. Racism—a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice—and other forms of oppression are sins, violating God’s intention for humanity. As Lutherans, we honor the value of calling a thing what it is, shining a light on evil to reveal it to the world. Since the inception of the ELCA, our aim has been to achieve a gospel vision of community. Though the church has developed strategies for multicultural ministry,⁹ named racism as sin,¹⁰ and even continues to affirm the importance of multiculturalism,¹¹ we have fallen far short of affirming authentic diversity. Thus, the ELCA had committed and recommitted itself to “an ongoing comprehensive [multicultural] ministry.”¹² Healing together is our responsibility. Dismantling racism and building an inclusive community are things we must do together.

As Martin Luther counseled us, we can do no good works of our own accord. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to speak, listen, and act, as on the day of Pentecost. Article 20 of the Augsburg Confession states:

[I]t may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are enabled to do good works.

This work of justice, peacemaking, and reconciliation is not only our call; we are equipped to perform it, as members, congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. In this humbleness we can remember that Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation¹³ and that we belong to each other.

⁵ “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

⁶ In accordance with “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

⁷ “[Future Directions: Goal Two](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

⁸ In Romans 12:4-5 and Ephesians 2:19, the apostle Paul gives us the image of the body of Christ and the household of God.

⁹ “A Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991.

¹⁰ “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture,” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993.

¹¹ Called Forward Together in Christ, 2015.

¹² “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

¹³ “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation”

If we remain silent, it may be as Mordecai told Esther:

God will bring healing, relief and deliverance to the world from another place. And, who knows? That you have come to your privileged position for such a time as this.¹⁴

As we address the theological framework for authentic diversity, we recount that we are a humanity enslaved to sin and falling short of the glory of God.¹⁵ We also recount that we are a church gathered in freedom and looking toward the freedom of God's reign as announced and embodied by Jesus. Trusting the promise of freedom, we confess that each of us is held captive by sin.¹⁶ Because we are sinners as well as saints, we rebuild walls that were broken down by Christ, fall back into enslaving patterns of injustice, and betray the truth that sets us free. Because we are saints as well as sinners, we reach for the freedom that is ours in Christ.

The racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers erected by racism and other forms of oppression deny the truth that all people are created by God and, therefore, created in dignity. Racism and other forms of oppression fracture and fragment church and society. When we speak of racism and other forms of oppression as though they were only matters of personal attitude, we underestimate them. We have only begun to comprehend the complexity of the sin, which spreads like an infection through the entire social system. Racism and other forms of oppression infect and affect everyone, though their impact varies according to race, ethnicity, culture, and such additional factors as gender, sexuality, and ability.

As siblings in Christ, baptized into the priesthood of all believers, we must hold one another accountable in confession and repentance. Racism may affect each of us differently, but we must take responsibility for our participation, acknowledge our complicity, repent of our sin, move toward restoration, and pray to God for reconciliation.

Healing: Why Healing?¹⁷

The historical and contemporary reality of racism demonstrates that racism is violence, manifested in multiple ways to injure and harm individuals and the greater society. The church in society as an agency of the redemptive, restorative will, and reign of God, carries a responsibility and an opportunity to be a primary facilitator of healing from the generational trauma of racism, internalized racial oppression, white supremacy, and racial injustice in contexts both foreign and domestic.¹⁸

The ELCA, as church in society, has been and is complicit in this racial hindering and harm—institutionally, systemically, and structurally. This hindering and harm must first be boldly named and identified as diminishing the life and vitality of the ELCA's congregations, synods, churchwide organization, and related agencies and institutions. As the ELCA was unable to reach a constitutional goal of 10 percent people of color/and or whose primary language is other than English by 1998, it was removed from the ELCA constitution in 2016. The removal was attempted en bloc (without discussion) but was brought to the floor of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly by concerned voting members who saw the placement of the 10 percent goal in an en bloc motion as an offense made to marginalized communities within the ELCA.

Our church must, with increasing intentionality, acknowledge and name the deep and pervasive wound of racism. Our church must boldly recognize and renounce the many forms of denial that contribute to the continuation of racist thought, action, policy, and practice. Our church must fully engage in a *metanoia* movement—a change of heart and mind—that will, in partnership with the gospel, generate redemptive recognition, restorative justice, and the conscious development of capacity for healing. Goal three of Future Directions 2025 aims to equip church members to “understand, speak out, and act against discrimination based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and social status.”¹⁹ If truly embodied and enacted, this can initiate a healing process within the ELCA.

(2 Corinthians 5:18).

¹⁴ Esther 4:14 (paraphrased).

¹⁵ Romans 3:23.

¹⁶ 1 John 8.

¹⁷ How can we heal without honest and humble confession?

¹⁸ The Task Force acknowledges there are other varied ways in which individuals experience oppression; gender, gender identities, sexuality, physical, and neurological difference, are only a few. These manifestations of diversity are of no less importance than the specific ethnic and cultural diversity named in this document.

¹⁹ “[Future Directions: Goal Three](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Some synods, associations, and congregations within the ELCA have shown leadership by developing antiracism programs, training antiracism facilitators, and working to prioritize the dismantling of racism within their communities. Yet this should be the work of all entities within the ELCA, not just a few. This work must boldly reflect the historical and present lived experiences and stories of those affected by racism and racial oppression within the ELCA.

Structural Accountability

Within the myriad structures of the ELCA, people experience a diversity of faith journeys. Through these individualized experiences, people are called by God to accompany one another together in community. When transformed into Christ's image, one joins a community of people who affirm the values of diversity, dignity, compassion, justice, and inclusion, and who summon the courage to change and to invest in beloved community. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. defined beloved community as a "global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of all the earth." This vision can be realized only by creating a climate of accountability that grows out of love, not guilt. The ELCA's congregations, synods, colleges, universities, seminaries, and churchwide organization must become accountable in this journey of creating authentic diversity in observance of our baptismal promise. Working through the Holy Spirit, we are gathered and created to be a beloved community that includes all. This inclusivity is reflected in goal five of Future Directions 2025, especially through leadership in governance "to provide for clarity in roles and authority, strong relationships and shared leadership and a culture of willing accountability."²⁰

The task force is committed to a calling that the manifold communities of the ELCA exhibit *authentic diversity*—demographically matching the ethnic and racial diversity of their contexts, as stated in the ELCA constitution (5.01.A16.), while also understanding that racial and ethnic diversity intersects with other marginalized identities (including gender, sexuality, and ability) and recognizing their vulnerability. To accomplish this, the church must embody Christ's mission through the lens of a *crucified* Jesus, who gathers all to himself in one family devoid of hierarchies and unhealthy power structures. This communal life mutually respects, nurtures, and embraces, with the certain hope that, though each member of the community remains unique, our fellowship will transcend age-old borders that hinder forward progression and God will be glorified.

Theological Education and Leadership Development

Theological education within the ELCA is highly Eurocentric and rooted in hierarchical colonial education practices. ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries are overwhelmingly white communities of privilege at all levels of staff, faculty, students, and decision-making bodies. The curriculum of our seminary education makes room for other races and cultures only when they are palatable and serve as foils to a Eurocentric, predominantly white agenda. Our institution and churches pay minimal attention to social movements such as "Black Lives Matter." Over the years, theological education within the ELCA has failed to equip Lutherans with an understanding of the gospel that can help dismantle racist practices and structure within our churches and institutions. The inadequacy of theological education and leadership formation in our church should be addressed by engaging voices from the margins.

Without enforcing assimilation, colleges, universities, and seminaries must create equity and equitable opportunities to study theology, share in privilege and power, and serve the people of God. Students, faculty, and staff of color must be given equitable opportunities to participate in seminaries, congregations, and decision-making bodies at all levels of leadership, including boards, presidencies, permanent chairs, etc. This must be modeled by this church's leadership, starting at the churchwide organization.

Specifically, within leadership formation, seminaries must create spaces and resources for people of color to engage in higher education. Programs, such as Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) and lay mission schools, need to be promoted to recognize the leadership and gifts that people of color bring to make the ELCA a truly diverse church. Discernment and candidacy for ministry must be systems of support and not processes of inhibition and intimidation, especially for people of color.

We need theological education and leadership formation that affirms our freedom to embrace and uphold the gospel mandate. This mandate is biblically rooted and centers on the life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Instead, the values upheld by ELCA colleges and seminaries have been predominantly those of the status quo, reinforcing a colonial, Eurocentric model of education and leadership.

We need theological education and leadership formation that is life-giving, transforming, and transcending. It

²⁰ ["Future Directions: Goal Five,"](#) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

must also be honest, impartial, and inclusive. With education and leadership focused primarily on western and Eurocentric voices, the stories of those who do not fit such a model are excluded from the greater narrative of the gospel. This is a denial of identity and existence. Theological education and leadership must endorse not a single, controlling narrative but a collection of stories and experiences that bring wholeness to the body of Christ as represented in God's creation. Goal three of Future Directions 2025 must be made manifest in theological education and leadership cultivation, particularly in building "confidence and competence among lay leaders and rostered ministers to provide an authentic welcome to people from different cultures and circumstances and embrace the ideas and experience they bring."²¹ When we know and embrace one another's complete story within God's created world, we have a greater ability to share honestly, to be impartial, and to live into inclusivity and authentic diversity.

We need theological education and leadership formation that honors and embraces the covenant of being "reconciled in Christ." We need a new hermeneutic in speaking of reconciliation with one another, focused on a crucified and resurrected Christ. We must also recognize that reconciliation is not a singular event but a process that must be fostered, cultivated, and developed over time to pass on to future generations.

Finally, we need theological education and leadership formation that practices cultural humility while also engaging the power of the gospel. There is no single cultural context in which the gospel exclusively resides or is better comprehended. Both the gospel and our various cultures are important to the church of which we are a part.

Partnerships with Full Communion, Ecumenical, and Interreligious Partners, and With Related Organizations

Given the changes happening around the world, many denominations, institutions, and organizations have been reexamining their traditional postures toward justice and discrimination. Social change cannot be stopped, so the church must embody the gospel of Jesus Christ and not fear change.

The time has come to embody what we believe and preach, yet never forgetting the lessons learned of past inaction and indifference that have lasting generational impacts. Past inactions and stances of indifference include adhering to the doctrine of discovery, slavery, and the accumulation of wealth at the expense of marginalized communities. The church must renew its commitment to the fullness of authentic diversity represented in God's creation within denominations, institutions, and organizations. We must seek, ask, and understand the stories of those impacted by inaction and indifference. We must recognize what divides us, what continues to hurt the fullness of God's creation, and begin a communal process that will embody compassion and understanding.

We recognize that many of the ELCA's full communion partners struggle with similar histories of inaction and indifference. Many of these partners have recognized and are learning from their past actions, especially concerning authentic diversity. Some denominations and institutions have moved faster than others, yet all have recognized that justice work and partnerships cannot survive in a vacuum. There is a common belief that, to strive for and embody justice, we must commit to working together. This commitment must be made active and tangible through allocation of resources, including people and money. Investing in partnerships with other denominations, institutions, and organizations can prompt a congregation to reassess its views²² and can create new opportunities to develop training and educational material for youth and children.²³

The ELCA is not alone in working toward authentic diversity. We must take advantage of the work already completed and lessons already learned from our ecumenical partners and related organizations. We have the unique opportunity to share not only resources but also the burden of labor. We must consult and learn from different organizations within the ELCA—such as Women of the ELCA—that have been deeply invested in addressing discrimination and racial justice for some time. This need for partnership is reflected in goals one and four of Future Directions 2025, recognizing the need for dialogue and coordinated action with ecumenical partners and related organizations to embody the church we desire to be.

We must ask ourselves how the ELCA has not only allowed but also perpetuated a culture of division that has kept us from an authentic diversity. In seeking answers, we must discern with our full communion partners and related organizations what it means to embody the vision of a beloved community. As siblings in the gospel, we must be invested in this work together, so that we might not only learn from one another but also work together

²¹ "[Future Directions: Goal Three](#)," Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

²² "[Welcoming Diversity: An Inventory for Congregations](#)," Partners for a Racism-Free Community, www.prfc-gr.org.

²³ "[AntiRacism/Diversity – Required Training - Sept 29](#)," United Church of Christ.

to bring about the fullness of God's reign. This involves learning lessons from years past, reassessing and recalibrating our work,²⁴ beginning a process of healing, and committing to embody change from within ourselves and our institutions.

Recommendations

To help the church to fully engage in a *metanoia* (a change of heart and mind) movement, the task force has developed recommended responses to be embodied within the ELCA. Some of these recommendations are currently being implemented, whereas others will require a thoughtful, communal, and embodied response that can move us to better comprehend and incarnate authentic diversity within the expressions of the ELCA.

Recommendations for Healing

1. Awareness

Raising awareness calls us to:

- Host learning opportunities for a deeper understanding of the systemic and root causes of historical and contemporary racism and internalized racial oppression.
- Develop liturgical and teaching resources related to our baptismal covenant, with the need of confession as part of the awareness of naming and addressing racism within the ELCA.
- Encourage individuals to report instances of oppression, exclusion, etc. to a designated person outside their system who will document and facilitate resolution.

2. Reflections

The work of reflections calls us to:

- Encourage those participating in the provided learning opportunities to write reflection papers, blogs, social media posts, etc. on insights gleaned from those sessions, and share their work within congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization.

3. Training

The training for this work calls:

- ELCA synods, seminaries, colleges, and universities to require their staff and rostered ministers to participate in antiracism training every two to three years, and that training should be reported in the Ministry Leader Profile and annual reporting. This type of training is reflected in the 2016 Churchwide Assembly resolution on Racial Justice (CA16.05.22).
- Synods providing resources and training for their congregational members on white privilege, internalized racial oppression, and cultural humility. Such training would intersect with issues of gender, sexuality, class, ability, naturalization status, etc. in a way that is holistic, comprehensive and mutual.
 - Work in affinity groups, caucus groups, etc.
 - Empowerment through an educational process.
 - Support for gatherings such as Multicultural Summit.
- The Office of the Presiding Bishop develop a theological statement on deconstructing whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy.
 - Synods are strongly urged to include the statement in any antiracism training provided to rostered leaders.
 - The Office of the Presiding Bishop develop educational and worship resources that support the statement, for use by synods, congregations, and antiracism teams.
 - The churchwide organization incentivize training and teaching of the statement by linking a specified percentage of its financial support for Lutheran institutions of higher learning to the development and implementation of curricula that encompass the statement.

²⁴ “A Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel” and “Recommitment to a Strategy for Proclamation of the Gospel.”

Recommendations for Structural Accountability Call

1. The churchwide organization to develop an assessment process, to be utilized across all three expressions of the ELCA, that records, maps, and evaluates the efforts of diversity initiatives. Planning, Research and Evaluation, in partnership with appropriate churchwide staff and stakeholders, to create a Synod Accountability Report Card Toward Authentic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; synod bishops and directors for evangelical mission (DEMs) be responsible for providing data for this report card,²⁵ with the ultimate goal of an audit system across all three expressions of the ELCA.
2. Synods and the churchwide organization designate resources (for example, grants or the creation of specific funds) to incentivize multicultural educational events and antiracist leadership development for all leaders, both rostered and lay. This work will be done in alignment or conjunction with the vision for mission of Congregational Vitality.²⁶
3. Because congregations of color are closing at a higher rate than white congregations, a racial equity assessment process be initiated to determine the reinvestment of resources whenever any congregation is in conversation for closure.
 - The Office of the Presiding Bishop create an office(r) for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The primary functions of this office will be (a) to equip and support leaders at all levels of the church to understand, speak out about, and act against discrimination based on race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or social status, and (b) to receive reports of harassment and discrimination and to investigate such claims, working in conjunction with functioning areas such as marketing, legal counsel, and human resources. This office will also assess the organization's current representation and recruitment of people of color, people whose primary language is other than English, and other protected classes.
4. The Office of the Presiding Bishop and Conference of Bishops incorporate mandatory diversity training into its orientation of new bishops. Every current and established bishop be assigned a diversity and inclusion coach.
5. Synods and the Domestic Mission unit develop resources/funding for alternative communities to:
 - Assess and develop new measures of evaluation and benchmarks for ministries that do not follow traditional congregational models.
 - Increase representation of people of color and/or people whose primary language is other than English at synodical tables—including but not limited to the Vitality table, Stewardship Mission Support table, and Strategic Thinking table—to adapt strategies for creating and cultivating authentically diverse leadership.
6. Synods encourage all congregations to learn about their communities and neighborhoods, and to develop and implement outreach plans geared toward increasing authentic diversity representative of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic class, and ability. The Domestic Mission unit will develop tools to aid congregations in this work.
7. The churchwide organization strongly encourage, appropriately prepare and incentivize synods and predominately white congregations to call rostered ministers of color, particularly women of color.
8. The churchwide organization work with synods to monitor the duration of the call process for people of color, particularly women of color. The average duration of the call process for white males will serve as a benchmark, and people of color still waiting for call after that amount of time has passed will receive priority.

²⁵ Gap Analysis from 1997 Recommitment assessment to today; Designate funding to Provide Intercultural competency program & work for congregations doing multicultural ministry or wanting to do it ([assessment](#), [tools for preparation](#), resources for development of readiness)

²⁶ “[Future Directions: Congregational Vitality](#),” Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

9. The churchwide organization in partnership with synods determine the extent to which all white or predominantly white congregations are implementing goal three of Future Directions 2025 and the extent to which they are engaged in outreach to people of color in their geographic location or beyond.
10. Synods and the churchwide organization incentivize (through financial support, human resources, student debt forgiveness, etc.) white or predominantly white congregations to call people from marginalized communities.
11. The Mission Advancement unit, in conjunction with the Ethnic Specific Ministries, Racial Justice, and Multicultural desks, develop a communications strategy to highlight the ELCA's efforts toward strategic authentic diversity. This includes alerting mainstream media to the ELCA's shifts in investment toward greater diversity and presenting our written and spoken history in a way that shows the true full diversity within the historical bodies of the ELCA.
12. The Church Council further empower this task force or create another external body to track this work, support the staff desk responsible for it, and the assessment of:
 - Intentional relationships between the areas doing this work;
 - Reporting and auditing process;
 - Full accountability for the work of strategic authentic diversity in alignment with goal five of Future Directions 2025.

Recommendations for Theological Education and Leadership

1. The boards of ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries be authentically diverse and focus on stakeholder engagement to ensure such diversity.
2. The staff of ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries be authentically diverse, with professors, pastors, field education directors, and supervisors for internship and ministry in context who are people of color or LGBTQIA+ people of color, or who have shown the cultural competency to engage with communities of color and their many facets.
3. ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries be multicultural centers offering space/safety, educational resources, and policy changes that address the specific needs of people of color in all their facets.
4. In consultation with the Theological Education Advisory Committee, synods and churchwide organization develop a comprehensive multicultural curriculum that integrates the concept of cultural humility. This curriculum will be part and parcel of the full requirements for being rostered in the ELCA.
5. Supervisors for internship and ministry in context and contextual education directors participate in antiracism training that includes all systemic oppressions and stresses a cultural humility representative of strategic authentic diversity.
6. The churchwide organization recommit monies from the Fund for Leaders capital campaign to the Educational Grant Program to ensure that such grants are intentionally and appropriately distributed to the communities of color for which they are intended. Specifically:
 - Develop a plan in partnership with ethnic-specific directors and associations to welcome the gifts, skills, and bodies of work of theologians and lay leaders from marginalized communities, and to promote and distribute the opportunities for learning from the work of theologians, teachers and leaders from marginalized communities.
 - Provide funding for mentorships between lay and rostered leaders of color and those interested in and exploring opportunities within lay and rostered ministry.

- Encourage pathways to leadership for people of color and people whose primary language is other than English, including church council boards, boards of Lutheran organizations, employment within the ELCA, and access to ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries.
7. ELCA colleges, universities, and seminaries require a percentage of faculty to be representative of strategic authentic diversity.
 8. The churchwide organization create a database of rostered and lay leaders of color to create an effective networking platform.
 9. Synods and the churchwide organization invest in lay leadership schools and lay formation that is culturally responsive.
 10. ELCA seminaries provide guidance on incorporating cultural competency into the Hein-Fry Book of Faith Challenge and expanding its panels to be more representative of strategic authentic diversity.
 11. The churchwide organization strategically disburse Fund for Leaders scholarships to enhance the capacity of people of color who are TEEM candidates, non-English speakers, part-time students, or seminary students. Provide communities of color with opportunities for student leadership and reinstate the Horizon Internship Program so that students of color can train in their own communities.
 12. Synods and the churchwide organization institute annual leadership schools of governance that give people of color and persons impacted by poverty—particularly young adults from a diverse range of communities—the opportunity to both learn and affect governance, polity, structure, and practice of the ELCA’s three expressions.
 13. The churchwide organization create a pathway for lay congregational leaders of color to pursue greater leadership opportunities within their congregations and synods.
 14. The churchwide organization incentivize Lutheran institutions of higher learning to hire faculty, deans, and/or presidents from marginalized communities by linking such hires to a specified percentage of the financial support provided to those institutions.

Recommendations for Partnerships With Full Communion, Ecumenical, and Interreligious Partners and Related Organizations

1. Working in alignment with Congregational Vitality, synods and the churchwide organization to establish grants for congregations and synods to fund work that focuses on strategic authentic diversity.
2. The ELCA intentionally partner with The Episcopal Church (TEC) and other full communion, ecumenical and interreligious partners on justice, antiracism, and reparations, while also sharing resources and the burden of labor to broaden such work and relationships.
3. The Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Domestic Mission unit to review the racial audit processes of our full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners for the purpose of developing a similar audit within the ELCA.
4. Increase the level of intentional engagement with historically ethnic-specific religious communities, which includes through Churchwide Assembly memorials, and establish relationships with historically black denominations.
5. The churchwide organization, synods and other appropriate ELCA agencies work with full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners to address and name historical and current oppressions and tell the truth about denominational, congregational, and organizational wealth. This includes learning the racial

history of our religious partners, with areas of study including but not limited to:

- Kristallnacht,
 - the massacre of the Mennonite,
 - actions to/with the African-descent community,
 - Salzburgers,
 - communities whose parents, etc., were purchased by the Ku Klux Klan,
 - repudiation of the doctrine of discovery, and
 - the legacy of slavery.
6. Congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization research the titled curricula of full communion, ecumenical, and interreligious partners, utilizing and adapting educational materials for youth and children. This research will also include material from partners' publishing houses that have an ecumenical department. Because this is a common effort, the churchwide organization may need to incentivize congregations and synods by establishing grants to fund this work.
 7. The churchwide organization work with the National Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation Communion Office, and the ELCA's synod partners to address the goal of strategic authentic diversity.
 8. The churchwide organization honor the work of our related agencies through board development, engagement, and utilization of already existing curricula.
 9. The churchwide organization monitor authentic diversity in representation on boards of ELCA Related Organizations.
 10. The churchwide organization intentionally engage directors for evangelical mission and roundtables to increase diversity among senior pastors, executives at Lutheran social service organizations, CEOs, and other leadership positions within related organizations.