

A Statement on Racism in our Community

As a Pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Kingston Ontario I am voicing our faith community's commitment to acknowledge racism in our midst.

The following is my personal statement of privilege:

I am the child of European immigrants and American settlers and I have never been questioned as to why I live in North America. My Grandfather's quick rise to an executive-level position post WW2 has afforded me access to two university degrees debt-free. As a recovering addict, I have had countless encounters with police officers and have they have never resulted in anything more than a gentle warning. I have not faced racism in my life. I have witnessed racism and I have been silent.

Through my childhood in the ELCIC, during my education as a ministerial candidate, as a pastoral intern, and as a pastor I have witnessed racism in our organization. In order for us to create a safe space for all people, our congregation must be led to face a reality that is not confronted because it is inconvenient for privileged people to talk about. We must ask why is the ELCIC a predominantly white Christian denomination.

The following is what our congregation council and I are committing to as we lead our congregation:

1. We will invite people of colour to speak and lead our services and they will teach us during our Christian education events.
2. We will collectively study books and resources on the experiences of people of colour.
3. When racism occurs and racial biases are expressed at church events or in the church facility they will be addressed and brought forward to the pastor.
4. Our social justice committee will seek local advocacy groups that confront the systemic oppression of people of colour to be in solidarity with.
5. We will investigate and educate ourselves on the racial divides in our correctional facilities. We will call out systemic racial oppression and biases that are present in our justice system. We will look for evidence of this in the lives of the inmates that we are committed to support in prison ministry.
6. Our council will review this process within our faith community annually.

Here are some things not tolerated at St. Marks Lutheran Church:

1. Asking people of colour, indigenous peoples and immigrants where they are from or why they are in this country.
2. Questioning the motive behind the Black Lives Matter Movement and the use of the phrase "All Lives Matter".
3. The racialization of groups of people.
4. Questioning the severity of racism toward a particular group.
5. Replying to statements of racial inequality with accounts of discrimination against white people or accounts of impoverished white people.
6. Statements questioning indigenous land claims and reparations.

This isn't work that is done through one campaign. This is ongoing work. Through prayer, the gift of grace and forgiveness it is possible for us to learn and grow in this way as a community of faith. This statement was approved by the council of St. Marks Lutheran Church Kingston Ontario.

Sincerely,

Pastor Seth Perry