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Dear Siblings in Christ,

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. (1 Corinthians 12:26)

With the death of George Floyd, we witnessed yet another senseless murder of a black man in the United States. We again see tears and anguish pounding through each step marched in resistance, struggle, and public protest; we feel deeply the brokenness and the separation between God's vision for community and where the world sits at this moment in history.

This is not simply an American problem. Canadians are not immune to prejudice and racial injustice. We join in with resounding force against the questionable circumstances surrounding the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in Toronto, and the desecration of a Jewish synagogue in Montreal. As the whole people of God called to manifest God's mission in the world, we must not be complacent and silent in our status quo. The Spirit moves us to stand courageously, to advocate persistently, and to act compassionately as people of faith.

We are not living out God's vision for community.

Furthermore, when we fail to speak out against acts of racism, we become silent perpetrators of injustice. In short, if we do not condemn racism, then we are guilty of it. It is our work, particularly as a community of faith, to speak out against acts of racism. It is our work to say loudly and clearly that we do not accept this reality. We must call out racism as sinful and deadly. That is only the beginning, for once we speak out against it, we must do the work of dismantling the systems that oppress.

We, the committee that represents your Synod, feel called to use our pulpits and platforms to speak out against racism. To shine a light on the ways in which racism exists in our community, and to pledge to do the work to make changes. To stand in solidarity with all who live with racial injustice as a daily reality. We feel called to pray fervently, to write persistently, and to encourage one another to allow God to work in us and through us for equity, love and an end to all forms of discrimination and racism.

June 21st is Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada. Racism in our country often takes the form of discrimination against our Indigenous Peoples: the missing and murdered Indigenous women, dishonoring of historical treaties and present promises, and ignoring that the wisdoms of Indigenous Peoples teach us how to be caretakers of this land. We must interrogate the past, look clearly at the present, and let it motivate our work for justice to build a future for our common good.

The preamble to the mission, vision and values statement of the Racial Justice Advisory Committee states, “We acknowledge that we each have different experiences of privilege and that in different settings, some of us experience more privilege and some experience less.” Each of us will experience the current events differently, depending on our life stories. Reach out to colleagues, parishioners, neighbours, and friends who might be feeling particularly vulnerable this week. Be present and listen when oppressed voices speak and stand with them.

We pray for courage as we do this work together, as allies. It is not easy, nor comfortable, but it is necessary. We are truly all in this together.

In solidarity with our Siblings of Colour,

Your Racial Justice Advisory Committee members:

Rev. Joanna Miller, Chair
Rev. JoAnne Lam
Pat Lovell
Rev. Jennifer Hoover
Emily Savage
Rev. Philip Mathai
Rev. Chun Zhang

Rev. Jonathan Schmidt
Rev. Katherine Gohm
Joy Philip
Rev. Rick Pryce
Deacon Scott Knarr
Selina Broadshaw

Rev. Michael Pryse, Bishop, Eastern Synod of the ELCIC
Rev. Christie Morrow-Wolfe, Assistant to the Bishop