

SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD: RESOLUTION 2022-3 REGARDING SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD REPARATIONS FUND

1 WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its predecessor church bodies
2 have advocated for action against racism and racist structures for over 50 years. In 1964 the
3 Lutheran Church in America stated that “The church must oppose such false views [racist
4 discrimination] with all the power of the truth of God: in its prayer and worship, in its theological
5 thought, in its nurture of the personal life, in its institutional forms, and in individual and
6 corporate action in society.” In 1974 the American Lutheran Church stated that, “The American
7 Lutheran Church should explore earnestly, in depth of honesty and courage, how it can make
8 amends to its nonwhite brothers and sisters for the exploitation, injustice, and dehumanization
9 they have suffered under its white racism.”

10 WHEREAS, in 2019 the ELCA committed itself to reconciliation with people of African Descent
11 and stated that “Institutional racism currently exists in the ELCA through discriminatory treatment
12 within the call process; inequitable compensation of clergy of color; racial segregation;
13 divestment from black communities and congregations; systemic policies and organizational
14 practices; and failure to fully include the gifts of leadership and worship styles of people of
15 African descent. ... Beyond empty promises or well-meaning intentions, this church recommits to
16 the work of racial justice, socioeconomic equity and racial reconciliation.”

17 WHEREAS, in the years following the end of the Civil War, racist laws, policies, and practices
18 prevented people of African descent from acquiring generational wealth. This took the form of
19 violent but legal theft including but not limited to sharecropping, convict leasing, withholding GI
20 benefits from Black veterans, segregation, denial of home and business loans, redlining, poorly
21 funded schools, mass incarceration, and predatory lending. People of African descent face an
22 extraordinary wealth disparity as compared with white peers that compounds over a lifetime.

23 WHEREAS, in the United States all people of color face discrimination and socioeconomic
24 disadvantage.

25 WHEREAS, rostered leaders of African descent and of color in the Sierra Pacific Synod suffer the
26 financial effects of past and present racist policies and practices. ELCA Churchwide data for 2020
27 show that full-time clergy of color earn a median of \$8,579 less per year than their white
28 colleagues. Not adjusted for inflation, over a period of twenty years, a clergy person of color
29 would typically earn \$171,580 less than their white colleagues, and \$17,158 less would be
30 contributed to their pensions by the congregations they serve.

31 WHEREAS, by some estimates, slaveholders extracted more than \$14 trillion worth of labor, in
32 today’s dollars, from their captives. White people continue to benefit financially from
33 enslavement, as well as from land theft, low wages paid to people of color, and other racist
34 financial laws, policies, and practices. This is the case whether their ancestors were personally
35 enslavers or not, and whether they personally put into place or engaged in discriminatory laws,
36 policies, and practices, or not. Congregations in the Sierra Pacific Synod, the majority of which
37 are white, have attained generational wealth through the contributions of their members and the
38 acquisition of buildings and property.

39 WHEREAS, the term "reparation" refers to the process and result of remedying the damage or
40 harm caused by an unlawful act. Forms of reparation include acknowledgement of wrongs done,
41 payment for wrongs done; cessation of wrongs done; long-term commitment to those wronged
42 and their descendants; and closure for all parties.

43 WHEREAS, examples of financial reparation are found in scripture. In the book of Ezra, the King
44 of Persia released Israelite captives to return to Judah and taxed Persian citizens to assist the
45 Israelites in their return. Those who paid the tax may or may not have personally enslaved
46 Israelites, and the Israelites who returned to Israel may or may not have been personally
47 enslaved. In the gospel of Luke, Zacchaeus the tax collector encountered Jesus and repented of
48 the wealth he had gained through legal theft. Zacchaeus promised to repay anyone he had
49 cheated fourfold, after which Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house."

50 WHEREAS, neither the Sierra Pacific Synod nor the ELCA has made full reparations to people of
51 African Descent and other rostered people of color.

52 WHEREAS, the Sierra Pacific Synod seeks not only to speak but to act, stating on its website: "We
53 work hard to put our faith into action. In today's complex world, we strive to make a difference in
54 practical, realistic ways."

55 RESOLVED, that the Sierra Pacific Synod Council will create a Reparations Fund for the purpose
56 of payment for wrongs done to rostered leaders of African descent and of color in the Sierra
57 Pacific Synod. The monies of the Reparations Fund shall be made available to applicants who are
58 self-identified people of African descent and people of color who are currently rostered or have
59 at one time been rostered in the Sierra Pacific Synod and/or in its predecessor bodies.

60 RESOLVED, that the Reparations Fund shall be overseen by a governing board of at least 3
61 people, to be established by the Sierra Pacific Synod Council. The board shall consist of a diverse
62 group of people of color. If a board member applies for funds in a given year, they shall recuse
63 themselves from votes regarding disbursement of funds in that year.

64 RESOLVED, that the source of income for the Reparations Fund shall include, going forward, 10%
65 of the monies generated from the sale of buildings and properties owned by the Sierra Pacific
66 Synod, and 10% of monies generated through the sale of congregational buildings and property,
67 and subsequently given to the Sierra Pacific Synod as undesignated funds. Other contributions
68 may also be given to the Reparations Fund.

69 RESOLVED, that Policy 13-001 - Policy on the Sale, Retention and Management of Real Property,
70 shall be amended to include the phrase "10% of the net proceeds shall be deposited into the
71 Synod's Reparations Fund," and shall read as follows: 5. Upon sale of any property, 10% of the
72 net proceeds shall be forwarded to the ELCA, 15% of the net proceeds shall be deposited into
73 the Synod's general fund, 10% of the net proceeds shall be deposited into the Synod's
74 Reparations Fund, up to 5% of the net proceeds shall be deposited into the Property
75 Management Fund (not to exceed a balance of \$250,000-See 9f.) and the remainder shall be
76 deposited in the Sierra Pacific Synod Mission and Ministry Endowment Fund.

77 RESOLVED, that there shall be an annual disbursement of monies to qualified applicants. Funds
78 are to be used at the discretion of the recipient.

79 RESOLVED, that the Reparations Fund Governing Board shall be established by the beginning of
80 May 2023, and a report shall be given at synod assembly. The first disbursement of funds be
81 made no later than the beginning of May 2024, and a report shall be given at synod assembly.

Submitted by not less than fifteen voting members of the 2022 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly, including:

Rebekah Turnbaugh, St. John's Lutheran Church, Sacramento
The Reverend Dr. Tia Pelz, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Fremont
The Rev. Crystal Larsen, Synodical Call to Sutter Health Alta Bates Medical Center, Berkeley
The Rev. Julie Kelly, Synodical Call to Episcopal Church of the Saviour, Hanford
Janet Katari, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lafayette
The Rev. Courtney Geibert, Messiah Lutheran, Redwood City
The Rev. John Bost, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Livermore
The Rev. Dr. Diane Bowers, Sabbatical Pastor, Advent Lutheran Church, Morgan Hill; Adjunct Faculty, PLTS
The Rev. Jon Haug, St. John's Lutheran Church, Sacramento
The Rev. Sharon Stalkfleet, Intentional Interim Pastor, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Berkeley
The Rev. Dianne Wendt, Lutheran Church of the Cross, Sacramento
The Rev. Jodi Golden-Lund, Intentional Interim Pastor, Trinity Lutheran / Foothill Presbyterian Church, Porterville
The Rev. Katelyn Rakotoarivelo, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Dublin
The Rev. Trudy Franzen, St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, El Dorado Hills
Clare McElaney, University Lutheran Chapel, Berkeley
The Rev. Guta Yadeta, Oromo Christ Evangelical Church, San Lorenzo
The Rev. Barbara B. Caine, Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, Newark
The Rev. Jim Clark-Moore, Encompass Homeless Ministry, Santa Clara
The Rev. Todd Benson, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Oakland
The Rev. Dr. Linda Boston, Lutheran Church of the Master, Sacramento