

Dear Bethel AME Church,

We bring you greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. From your brothers and sisters at St. Matthew's, St. Andrew's, Grace, and Good Shepherd that make up the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations in Champaign Urbana.

The ELCA and the African Methodist Episcopal Church have been ecumenical partners through coalitions such as the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC). In the 1990s, our two churches entered into theological dialogue seeking full communion and we have participated together in the cross-racial dialogue of the Conference of National Black Churches since 2015 and in the NCC's A.C.T. Now to End Racism initiative since 2018.

As part of our commitment to work together on June 17th ELCA churches all over the country will engage in prayers, litanies, and laments for the Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine. This day will forever be commemorated as a feast day of repentance from racism within our denomination and the Emanuel Nine; Myra Thompson, Tywanza Sanders, Susie Jackson, Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Ethel Lance, Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Rev. Daniel Simmons, Sr., Cynthia Hurd, Rev. Clementa Pinckney will be known as martyrs of the faith.

Part of this commemoration involves our need, as one of the whitest denominations in the United States, to explicitly repent of our complicity in the racism that infects our national culture. That complicity has been left largely unexamined by us, and manifests itself in harmful attitudes and actions, as was as in inaction. We are painfully aware that Dylan Roof was baptized in the ELCA and on the rolls of an ELCA congregation. Two of his victims, Rev. Daniel Lee Simmons Sr., and Rev. Clementa Pinckney, were graduates of the Lutheran Theology Southern Seminary, one of 8 ELCA seminaries.

Included in this letter are the resources being sent out to ELCA churches to use in their worship and commemoration services of the Emanuel Nine. It is our hope that this might be a small step forward as we seek to strive for justice and peace for our African American brothers and sisters.

We ask God for mercy and grace to deepen our faith, guide our thoughts, and empower us for repentance and faithful living.

Yours in Christ,

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
St. Andrew's Lutheran Campus Center
Grace Lutheran Church
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**