



Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 3, 2020

Dear Pastors, Deacons and Lay Leaders,

Synod Staff continue to work from home during this time of pandemic. A couple of us go into the office to check mail regularly. Your Bishop's Associates and I continue to visit churches, via Facebook live, video and Zoom. Over this past month, I have been privileged to travel to Holy Comforter in Kingwood, Lord of Life in The Woodlands and Living Word in Katy to record or livestream worship.

We have also appreciated dropping in on your conference meetings. It is inspiring to see how you are navigating these challenging times, and working to keep people safe, especially the most vulnerable.

I hope you will use Presiding Bishop Eaton's sermon for Trinity Sunday June 7, 2020. The video is available now at [YouTube.com/ELCA](https://www.youtube.com/ELCA) and [Vimeo.com/ELCA](https://www.vimeo.com/ELCA). A Service of the Word is available in **PDF** and **WORD** format. Bishop Eaton updated her sermon to reflect the current situation following the death of George Floyd. This is a remarkable opportunity for our Presiding Bishop to do something that has never been done: to preach in most of our congregations on one Sunday. Links to the written transcript and videos with subtitles are posted in the video description. They can be found in English and Spanish. If you can't use the sermon this Sunday, consider using it another Sunday in June.

ELCA Worship has provided a Service of the Word (**PDF/WORD**) with appointed readings, corporate prayers of intercession, and hymn and song suggestions. Congregations may adapt and use this resource to produce online worship offerings to surround Bishop Eaton's sermon.

Next Sunday, we mark five years since a young man, who was raised in an ELCA congregation, walked into a Bible Study in an African-American church known as Mother Emanuel, and executed nine people. As a church, we adopted June 17 as a Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine, who were martyred on that day. I'm asking you to honor this on Sunday, June 14 in your congregation. This past week was marked by a deep frustration over racial inequality in America, following the death of George Floyd, who grew up in Houston. Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo said this week, "Racism is alive and well in America. Those who deny this are fooling themselves." This is the perfect time for us to talk about things that matter. Please remember the Emanuel Nine by name in your prayers. Consider addressing the difficult topic in your sermon. There are litanies and hymns that can be used. You can find [more resources](#) for this commemoration. Keep in mind June 19 is also **Juneteenth**.

Our synod Anti-Racism Team has been working on a contract with a consultant to help us address racism in our context. One of our deans suggested that it might be helpful to have some resources for dealing with racism. Here are some resources to help with conversations:

- [Presiding Bishop's Recommitment to combat racism and whitesupremacy \(May 29, 2020\)](#)
- [Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's pastoral message on COVID-19 racism and white supremacy \(May 13, 2020\)](#)
- [White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism \(Dr. Robin DiAngelo\) Discussion video](#)
- [So You Want to Talk About Race \(Ijeoma Oluo\)](#)
- [Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America \(Joseph Barndt\)](#)
- [Preaching about Racism: A Guide for Faith Leaders \(Carolyn B. Hessel, Preaching Professor AF Austin Seminary\)](#)
- For small groups or adult Sunday School consider watching [Emanuel](#), and using this [Study Guide](#) from Sojourners for discussion.
- And other great video is [A Time for Burning](#), about a Lutheran pastor and church in Omaha that tries to cross the race divide with simple dinner meetings between members of two Lutheran churches, one black and one white.
- Consider studying the [Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent](#)
- A host of other resources can be found on the [ELCA's Racial Justice Page](#)
- [31 Children's books to support conversations on race, racism and resistance](#)

Here are links to some recommendations and updates we have laid out previously:

- The ELCA *Considerations for Returning to In-person Worship*, available in **English** and in **Spanish**.
- *Twenty Questions for Congregations Considering In-Person Worship*. They can be found in **this previous letter**. **Louisiana | Texas**
- **May 6 Updated Recommendations for returning to in-person worship.**
- *Guidelines for Coming Back Together as a Congregation* in **English** or in **Spanish**
- *Coming back together for Worship* in **English** and **Spanish**.
- Synod Assembly registration refunds are taking significantly longer for Cvent to process than we had originally been led to believe. We continue to work with Cvent to ask for the latest updates and will pass those along to you as they are available. Please know that we are as frustrated and disappointed in the length of time this process has taken as you are.
- Lutherhill Camp **Update**

I have cancelled my sabbatical this summer given all that is going on. I will, however, be on vacation June 8-14, 2020. I will respond to messages when I return. Staff remain at your service. You can continue to directly reach the staff by calling the synod office at 281-873-5665 and choosing from the staff directory.

- Bishop's Associate **Chris Markert**
- Bishop's Associate **Tracey Breashears Schultz**
- Office Manager **Gretchen Lundquist**
- Administrative Services Coordinator **Aimee Elles**
- Bookkeeper **Beth Vu**

May the peace of Christ dwell in you richly.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Michael Rinehart

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