



ELCA  
God's work.  
Our Hands.

# European Descent Lutheran Association *for Racial Justice* **EDLARJ**

To be a visible and nameable anti-racist witness for a cross-cultural church



## Being Liked to Change the Narrative



*The assembly discussed anti-racism education with Dr. Clayton Schmitt, Provost of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary.*

*The Emanuel Nine Martyrs are an important witness for the school.*

*Dr. Clayton and the assembly spoke of the naïveté in the Lutheran Confessions about the sin of racism, and thus the need to incorporate specific theological reflection on racism, its history and abiding presence, into the traditional curriculum.*

*Dr. Schmitt also confirmed that our name change better expressed our mission.*

Our commitment to racial justice and witness to an anti-racist, cross-cultural church is coming out of the box. Our name change shows that. On Facebook, we gained 20 new likes with the announcement of the new name and saw an increase of activity – at one point reaching over 600 people. I'd like to see us hit a goal of 500 likes by the year end. We're at 351 today.

Why push Facebook likes? Because media influences the national narrative. As Robert Redford said in an interview about his new movie "Truth", "It's about the story."

The truth that the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice is telling is a classic coming of age story. For far too long European descent Lutherans have naively enjoyed their cultural privilege, missing how the Gospel powerfully frees our imaginations and fears to embrace the experiences of those who lack the privileges we enjoy. In my experience, once one

discovers this gospel freedom, there's no going back to naïveté. The baptismal call of rising to newness of life reinvigorates our passion and clarifies the faith to which we witness. The Spirit brings us into new community, into ongoing relationships with people who have seen our privilege long before we recognized it for ourselves.

In social media, we can share our stories of discovery widely. They all add up over time to help shape a new emergent narrative of being **church**: they who lift up those who have been bowed down and welcome that which was once feared.

According to Facebook, our likes come from major cities and rural areas around the U. S. and among numerous countries (our global mission!). I ask each one of us to actively recruit at least one new friend to like our

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## So What Can Our New Name Suggest?

The early September European American Lutheran Association General Assembly decision to change our name to the European Descent Lutheran Association For Racial Justice may prompt the question: So what does that mean? I believe it suggests one of our primary focuses as our tag line has long suggested: Partnering for Racial Inclusion and Justice. It is an answer to a question lurking in the back of my mind since a Board of Directors meeting during 2011 in Atlanta, where members of other ELCA ethnic associations spoke to us, and one of them asked, "Why do we, people of color, always

have to speak up first for justice?" This name change is one answer to that question. It can suggest a new intentionality on our part. Of course, it doesn't mean much if we, as EDLA Partners, don't work harder in making sure, as people who claim to be justified by God's grace, that we are also justice oriented for all of God's people. We fight injustice so God's children everywhere may better enjoy God's gifts for all.

Secondly, as mentioned in the emailed EALA Announcement of September 14 about General Assembly decisions, this name change separates us from white hate groups who

are increasingly using European American as part of their self-designation. Our new name still suggests the identification we've had since our beginning in 2008, namely descended from European immigrants, often identified as "white". We are that ethnic group in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and our focus is on seeking racial justice, not for us, but for people of color. We desire an inclusive and justice oriented church and society. We are saying we will speak and act up for this purpose. May God's Spirit move us to fulfill this new name!

*An Opinion by Board Member Paul Bauman, West Bend, WI.*

### Summer/Fall 2015

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## When Systemic Racism Still Shows Itself, Many Are Negatively Affected

### EDLARJ

On the web at [crossculturalchurch.org](http://crossculturalchurch.org).

Like us on Facebook as /EALAnet.

Twitter us @EuroAmLuthAssn.

*We are a partnering ethnic network within the ELCA, witnessing the New Day of full inclusion.*

*[Join the EDLARJ as a registered partner, working for racial justice and inclusion at crossculturalchurch.org!](http://crossculturalchurch.org)*

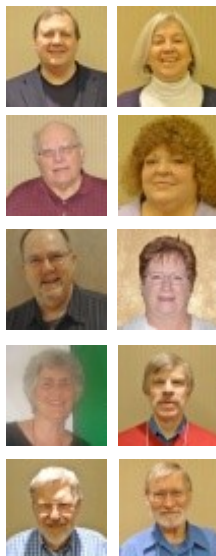
One of the workshops at our September EALA Conference and General Assembly was led by The Rev. Brenda Kneece, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council. She was invited because she is a native South Carolinian and has 20 year plus experiences in her present position. She shared with us the over 400 years of systemic racism in S. Car. starting with the colonial slave-holding era, to Reconstruction, Jim Crow, civil rights battles, raising and removal of the confederate flag at the state capitol, and the murder of 9 African Americans at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. While sharing this history, she related a personal story involving her father. To the surprise of the family, he

told how, as a young child in 1927 he and other white children plus all the negro children present, were forced to walk past the bodies of 3 lynched African Americans. It was done to teach them what they were to do when blacks created problems for whites and let negro children know what can happen to them. The “superior” whites were to maintain their superiority. She pointed out this kind of climate has been maintained over the many years of South Carolina’s history. People have been appropriately racialized and socialized.

She also indicated that young white men, called cavaliers by her, would often rape native and black women, so that today many South Carolinians may have relatives whom they do not

know, as was the case with the former U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond’s family. She saw what happened at the Charleston church as being informed by this long held racism which said and says people of color don’t count as much as those whose skin color is called white. Within 8 days of the Mother Emanuel killings, 6 black churches were burned. Other statistics shared pointed out the big differences in job, health care, housing, and education opportunities involving the races. The legislature may create programs to change the differences, but not fund them. Systemic, cultural, institutional, and structural racism has long been present to the detriment of everyone.

### Board Members



*Editorial Team:  
Paul Bauman, West Bend, WI, and  
Russell Meyer, Tampa, FL*

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Facebook page this month. We’d hit that 500 goal this month, and we would sow seeds that will “grow a hundredfold”.

Then next month, we can turn to Twitter!

It’s an honor to serve as president of the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice. Please name the EDLARJ in your prayers and ask that its board, partners, mission receive power from on high to fulfill its part of God’s mission in this world.

Grace and peace,  
Russell

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## Hispanic Association in a Name Transition

We are not the only ethnic association in a name transition. The ethnic association with whom we met at Lutheridge is now changing their name to the Association of ELCA Hispanic Ministries. Over 60 people from their congregations were present and they spent time in worship, workshops, and business meetings over the 2 day period. EALA involvement with them was at meals plus their opening and closing worship services and a healing service. Thanks to a very competent interpreter and transmitters with ear buds, we were able to know what was being said at these services. As mentioned in the September 14 email announcement, when our new name was mentioned by our new president at one of those services, there was spontaneous applause from them.

Another ethnic association, African Descent, was originally called African American and changed their name so that recent African immigrants might feel more comfortable with them.