**Tapestry/VA Synod Affirmation of Baptism/Call to Action**

in response to the Capitol Insurrection of January 6, 2021

A joint effort of the VA Synod Tapestry Team

*This rite may be used when a congregation is ready to commit or re-commit to the work of anti-racism. It may be used at the beginning of the service in place of Confession and Forgiveness or Thanksgiving for Baptism. It may be used in place of the Creed, or at some other point in the service that is appropriate. The rite may be used at the beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday) to begin the journey toward more awareness of the racism in our midst. In Year B (2021) the gospel text for Lent 1 includes Mark 1:9 -11 - Jesus’ baptism -, so this rite may be especially relevant now. If there are no baptisms on Easter, it may also be used at the Easter service as a sign of the new life Christ brings in and through our desire to move further along the journey toward anti-racism.*

*The use of the term BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and is used for its inclusivity.*

*A note on racism, and its effects on us all from “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture”, ELCA Churchwide Assembly, August 31, 1993:*

“Racism—a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice—is sin, a violation of God’s intention for humanity. The resulting racial, ethnic, or cultural barriers deny the truth that all people are God’s creatures and, therefore, persons of dignity. Racism fractures and fragments both church and society.

When we speak of racism as though it were a matter of personal attitudes only, we underestimate it. We have only begun to realize the complexity of the sin, which spreads like an infection through the entire social system. Racism infects and affects everyone, with an impact that varies according to race, ethnicity, or culture, and other factors such as gender or economic situation.

Racism, however, infects and affects everyone. It deforms relationships between and within racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. It undermines the promise of community and exacerbates prejudice and unhealthy competition among these groups. It robs white people of the possibility of authentic relationships with people of color, and people of color of the possibility of authentic relationships with white people.

Racism also can lead to the rejection of self, as when white people internalize guilt or people of color internalize values associated with white culture. It hinders us from becoming who God calls us to be.

When we rebuild walls of hostility and live behind them—blaming others for the problem and looking to them for solutions—we ignore the role we ourselves play in the problem and also in the solution. When we confront racism and move toward fairness and justice in society, all of us benefit.”

*As the people of God in Christ Jesus called to embrace all persons in the unconditional love of God, we acknowledge our participation in the systemic sin of racism, affirming our commitment as congregations and individuals to work together to eradicate the sin of systemic racism. As a guide for this work, we draw on the Affirmation of Baptism Rite as presented in Evangelical Lutheran Worship, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us to partner with Christ to renew Creation.*

*The presiding minister addresses the Assembly with these words:*

**Pastor**: Dear friends, we give thanks for the gift of baptism, God’s holy covenant with us as members of the Body of Christ. Living into that covenant,

**All:** Together we publicly declare and affirm our denial of and our participation in the systemic sin of racism; our desire to acknowledge the generations of physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional harm perpetuated against victims of racism; the separation from God that the sin of racism continues to create; and our willingness to follow the Holy Spirit, that we may be led into repentance as we listen to and advocate for victims. Bless us as God’s living hands who now commit to act for racial healing and reconciliation.

**Pastor**: Let us pray,

Merciful God, we thank you for your imaginative diversity in creating the peoples of the world.

You call, empower and gather us together by water and Word to embrace each other in the unconditional love first given to us by your Son, our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Uphold us by your baptismal grace that our hearts may be united in our commitment to eradicate the sin of racism,

**All:** Amen.

**Pastor**: People of God, do you renounce the forces of evil that defy God by insisting that white supremacy is God’s intention for Creation?

**All**: We renounce them.

**Pastor**: Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God by sustaining economic, social, political, judicial, educational and personal systems that take advantage of or exclude BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) persons?

**All:** We renounce them.

**Pastor**: Do you renounce the ways of sin that restrict how a person is perceived; how a person is affirmed; how a person is treated; how a person receives justice; and how a person is heard?

**All**: We renounce them.

**Pastor**: Do you renounce the sinful ways that white privilege plays out daily, by our choices on where to live; the schools our children attend; job and wage opportunities; healthcare; higher education; transportation; where we socialize; where and how we worship; those whom we elect to serve; and where products may be available for purchase?

**All**: We renounce them.

*A congregation may choose to adopt all of the suggested phrases within the brackets [ ] of the baptismal covenant, or if beginning with a specific initiative, choose specific bracketed phrases (or create their own) on which to focus their anti-racism efforts.*

**Pastor**: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

To live among God’s faithful people [by building a relationship with a congregation more

racially diverse than our own]

To hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper [in and through the witness, writings,

books, movies and podcasts by and about the lives and struggles of BIPOC (Black,

Indigenous, People of Color) children of God]

To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed [by speaking out when

racist comments are made, by hosting tough conversations in our church, and by standing with people who are BIPOC in times of adversity]

To serve all people, following the example of Jesus, [by promoting, supporting and following

the leadership of BIPOC people and working to promote healing through acts of repentance and change]

And to strive for justice and peace in all the earth [by supporting, learning and participating in non-violent strategies for change, and by supporting and making reparations to support BIPOC owned businesses, and non-profits]

**All:** We will, and we ask God to help and guide us.

**Pastor**: Almighty God, your people cry out to you in shame and remorse at the horrific sin of systemic racism that has gripped our nation for hundreds of years. We call upon you now to fill us with your Holy Spirit, to lead us into a new day where all people may live together in respect and peace. Send your Spirit to stir up in us a humble willingness to listen, understand and repent; the wisdom to discern your will; the desire to seek your justice; the resolution to name and confront systemic racism with the power of your love; and the joy of the unity we share by our baptism into Christ Jesus, in the name of the Father, and the Son + and the Holy Spirit,

**All**: Amen.