

A proposal for taking the next steps on the journey to becoming an anti-racist seminary

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(1) Establish a basic definition of anti-racism that all in the seminary community aspire to embody, and then reflect on that definition theologically. I am mindful of First Lutheran's "mission question" ("does love live here?"). Perhaps we could have a question that specifically asks how we are educating leaders to dismantle racism in communities of faith (connected, thus, to our mission statement).

(2) Develop an ombudsman process that invites people to engage in a restorative circle around specific issues of racism (whether in class, microaggressions, etc.) so that we have a step prior to filing legal complaints and so that we build up the muscles of engaging conflict as a source of learning and healing.

(3) Embrace an explicit form of lament and confession that we practice regularly at the beginning of classes, worship and public events. The goal here is to make clear that we understand how we as a seminary and faith community have benefited from racism, and that we ask God's help in seeking to dismantle its structures. All of us should become familiar with the ELCA's recent "Declaration to people of African descent," the renunciation of the doctrine of discovery, and other pertinent documents from our institutional sponsors.

(4) Invite everyone to learn how the US history of white supremacy has shaped what we do as a theological institution. I recommend that our faculty and staff read Willie James Jennings' book *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Eerdmans, 2020) together, and focus on what "belonging" means in our Christian understandings. If that book is too complex for students, perhaps we could ask them to read *Dear Church* by Lenny Duncan (Fortress, 2019).

(5) Focus intentionally on creating the structures and institutional culture necessary to foster true growth. I think asking our ELT and Board to read *An Everyone Culture* by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey (Harvard Business Review Press, 2016) as a way to ponder specifically the ways to create this kind of culture in our institution would be a good first step.

(6) Commit to a process of financial reparation and restoration. There has been energy expressed already about putting together a Center for Healing and Restorative Justice named for Richard Wallace. As we go through selling portions of our campus we should be reflecting on what percentage of the proceeds from those sales go into reparations. In addition to continuing the Jubilee scholarship process, for example, we should be putting in place additional financial and wellness support for students from BIPOC communities.

(8) Incorporate clear support throughout our curriculum for the culture/context outcome – and then build on that outcome a specific anti-racism outcome.

(9) Create a clear and accountable structure at Luther that represents all elements of the Seminary and which reports out each year on our progress on these goals. Such a structure might be modeled on the “committee addressing racism” which existed 20 years ago, and which has fallen off our org chart.