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African Descent Lutheran Association Invites Church to Prayer, Intentional Action in Wake of Tragedies in Baton Rouge, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Dallas

July 8, 2016 - The African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA) offers its collective prayers and empathy for the recent tragedies in Baton Rouge, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Dallas. In fact, our condolences grow each day as we all wake up and are notified of new incidents of violence upon innocent lives. The tensions of this real pain amongst people of color in each of our communities must be addressed by all of us with a sense of urgency. We unashamedly declare within the Church that Black lives matter. Although many of our White brothers and sisters may feel our declaration is an obvious truth in light of God's love for all God's children, we need you to know and see that has not been the experience for many of us in the USA, global community, and even in our Church (ELCA).

We invite all of us to think on these things that are true: Young Black males in recent years were at a far greater risk of being shot dead by police than their white counterparts – 21 times greater, according to a ProPublica analysis of federally collected data on fatal police shootings. Major evidence and reports show that Black women in crisis are often met with deadly force. Other realities that cannot be ignored include transgender people of color who face greatly elevated negative outcomes in every area of life. It would be even more troubling to mention the great inequalities experienced within the ELCA concerning people of color.

All of these are daily realities of faithful people among us. Much of this real pain and suffering has gone unnoticed and unaddressed far too long. Therefore, when Black lives are systematically devalued by church and society, our outrage justifiably insists that attention be focused on Black lives.

We invite the entire Church to show up prayerfully and intentionally against all societal values of supremacy, superiority, and complacency. For those wondering what to do and how to engage in this mission of solidarity, grab a prayer partner and just show up, pray, and provide an authentic ministry of presence as a part of our domestic mission and faith practices. Even if it is uncomfortable, be intentional in coffee hour conversations, sermons, social media and in each of our communities to declare action and support for the eradication of systemic practices that prevent true equality for all people. Develop alliances and connections with local associations like ADLA, civic/justice groups, ecumenical partners, and especially Historically Black Churches who are already doing the work of transformation. Together we can do more by joining in with others.

Jesus insists on the intrinsic value of all human beings and he models for us how God loves justly. We join in sharing the recent message of our Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, who reminds all of us of Jesus' words recorded in Luke 4, that 'Jesus proclaims good news to the poor, release to the jailed, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed'. The African Descent Lutheran Association in solidarity with each of the other ethnic specific associations further declares that this is what our Church and theology should look like: 'disciples who love publicly in a world of inequality.' May we live out the love of God justly by publicly saying #BlackLivesMatter.

~The Rev. Lamont Anthony Wells, President, African Descent Lutheran Association (ELCA)

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