



On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21, 2020, we lift up the importance of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) and commit our churches to recognize and celebrate this decade in our denominations. Through this International Decade we hear a call for our churches to do more to address anti-Black racism in Canada and globally.

We recognize that in proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. Around 200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent.<sup>1</sup>

We affirm the main objectives of the International Decade:

- Promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African Descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African Descent to the development of societies;
- Adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks according to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to ensure their full and effective implementation.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, in the Canadian context, our churches had participated in a colonizing nation-building process with our government. In the global context, our churches have been allied as well with colonial governments and oppressive structures. Churches have been a part of perpetuating injustice and violence, both directly and indirectly, to people of African Descent. The churches' role in the enslavement of people of African Descent is a significant part of this history and there is much to learn about the ongoing impacts of this history. White privilege and power is one of the ongoing legacies of enslavement that continues to affect societies and prevents churches from fulfilling God's call to be caring, respectful communities.

Racism and discrimination have a variety of forms. While feeling called this day to acknowledge the dignity, respect and human rights of People of African Descent, we trust that what is learned will inform-in-context a variety of circles where work for reconciliation continues.

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1 <https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/>

2 <https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/plan-action.shtml>

Today, we celebrate people of African descent and we strengthen our commitment to addressing the root causes and current manifestations of anti-Black racism within the church. To this end, we plan to gather and share resources that encourage conversations across our churches, facilitate deeper understanding of human rights and help eradicate racism. We hope to work with a variety of people who share these objectives, including our interfaith partners.

We regard this statement as the beginning of much important work and mutual transformation. We ask God to help and guide us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Johnson".

The Rev. Susan Johnson  
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda Nicholls".

The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls  
Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Bott".

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Richard Bott  
Moderator, United Church of Canada