



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Worship Resources for Day of Lament Against anti-Asian Racism March 21, 2021

The Asian and Pacific Islander Association of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America issued a statement on March 4, 2021 addressing the increase in violence directed toward Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. The ELCA Conference of Bishops affirmed the statement on March 5, 2021. Read the full statement here: <https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8089>

The statement calls the church to declare a Sunday during this Lenten season to lament in order to express solidarity with, help in healing, and support Asian American victims of violence. March 21, 2021, the Fifth Sunday in Lent, is named as a common date for this day of lament. However, worshiping communities may choose a different date as appropriate for their context.

These worship resources may be used and adapted in various ways as part of a regular weekly service or as a stand-alone gathering. The Invitation to Solidarity, Opening Litany, Communal Confession, and Embodied Blessing and Healing could be used together as part of the service's gathering rite. Other prayers may be adapted as part of the Prayers of Intercession or at other appropriate times in the service.

Consider Scripture readings in an Asian language, if possible. 1 Corinthians 12:20-27 is one possibility, or a reading appointed for the day elsewhere in the service.

Invitation to Solidarity

A leader may invite the assembly into this time of solidarity and confession.

Since the pandemic started in early 2020, there have been more than 3,000 reported incidents of anti-Asian racism, according to [Stop AAPI Hate](#), an initiative that tracks violence and harassment among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In January 2021 these violent attacks targeted the elderly. An 84-year-old Thai man was shoved to the ground as he was taking his morning walk in San Francisco. In the neighboring city of Oakland, a 91-year-old man was pushed down, which caused him to fall face first into the pavement. For a community whose elders are deeply respected and looked up to as the source of communal and filial unity and wisdom, this hits hard.

I invite you to a communal confession to show our solidarity with our Asian siblings.

Opening Litany

God of all people and the whole of creation,
make us into who you have created us to be.

Make us your hands, your feet, your eyes, your lips,
your body in the world.

Spirit of Peace, reconcile us,
connect us to yourself, to each other.

You are the source of our healing and hope,
for if one is hurt, all of us are hurt.

Clothe us, your body in the world,
with your love, mercy and grace.
Amen.

Communal Confession

Asian siblings are hurting. How do we, the church, hear their painful cry, and act together in solidarity? We pray ...

Lord, have mercy.

Are Asians invisible? They are branded as the model minority — therefore, not expected to speak up. They cry for justice. Can anyone hear them? We pray ...

Lord, have mercy.

Asians are feared as a community. Asians have complex cultures and languages, so they are generally omitted. How can we, the church, offer our curiosity and respect when we encounter a multitude of gifts in diversity and uniqueness? We pray ...

Lord, have mercy.

Asian children are called many names, most recently “coronavirus,” or yelled at to “go home.” When we, the church, ask, “Who is our neighbor?,” how can we truly mean it in welcoming words and actions? We pray ...

Lord, have mercy.

Asians are used by the mainstream dominant culture to shame and put a wedge against other communities of color. Claiming our calling that all are created in God’s image, how can we stand in solidarity with those hurting? We pray ...

Lord, have mercy.

God's forgiveness is greater than any hurt and pain of the body. For Asian theologies, forgiveness is an invitation to examine and reexamine what constitutes our identity, not only our individual identity but, most especially, our communal identity. May God's forgiveness invite us all to face who we are truly as members of the body of Christ. May this rich promise embrace us all, taking away the pain of our battered body.

Amen.

(The above resources are by the Rev. Teresita Valeriano on behalf of the Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders-ELCA.)

Embodied Blessing and Healing

The leader may guide the assembly in this embodied blessing by first demonstrating the actions with a verbal explanation, then inviting the assembly to repeat the actions in silence.

At a protest against anti-Asian racism, Black and Asian ministers shared stories of embodied hurt and a form of an embodied movement as non-verbal gestures of healing and blessing. In solidarity with our Asian American and Pacific Islander siblings in Christ, I invite you to join me in this embodied blessing and healing.

First I will demonstrate with a brief meaning; then you will follow me; then we will move together in silence.

Take a deep breath. Exhale.

Place hands on heart. I see myself – acknowledge my own feelings – my own body.

Bow. Acknowledging sacredness, resilience, humanity, strength in myself. *Bow.*

Look around. I see you.

Cup hands to ears. I hear you.

Fold arms across chest. Mourning, feeling collective sadness, grief, lament, anger.

Bow. Acknowledging sacredness, resilience, humanity, strength in others.

Open hands, palm up, with a breath. Receiving blessings from God and from one another.

Touch with one hand and extend the other hand to another person. Heart-to-heart compassion.

Let us now begin this embodied blessing and healing together in silence.

Let us begin by taking a deep breath.

The blessing is repeated in action without spoken words.

Amen.

(Embodied Blessing created by the [Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity](#) for an anti-Asian violence protest in Oakland, Calif. on February 13-14, 2021. Asian and black leaders and the entire community gathered embodied this blessing for healing.)

Lamenting Racism

This lament and prayer may be used in preparation for the work of faithful listening in discussions around racism and racial reconciliation, and at other appropriate times. The naming of communities, situations, and experiences may be adapted for the context or occasion.

People of color may opt for silence during parts of this lament to contemplate the community's words.

A leader introduces a gathering lament in these or similar words.

The sin of racism hurts communities of color, fractures human relationships, and denies God's good creation. Lament is a way for us to recognize the harm caused by racism.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). God's grace in Christ frees us for the difficult work of recognizing and lamenting racism.

We are all part of one body in Christ, called to act with equity, fairness, and justice. God's saving love creates grace-filled spaces within us and within our relationships. God's saving love calls and leads us toward rooting out the racism that continues to infect the body.

A leader invites those gathered into lament and prayer in these or similar words.

Within the whole human family, people of color have experienced both interpersonal aggression and structural oppression instead of abundant life. We recognize and lament the harm racism has caused to *African Descent communities; American Indian and Alaska Native communities; Indigenous Peoples within Canada; Arab and Middle Eastern communities; Asian and Pacific Islander communities; and Latinx communities.* We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

We have assigned the notion of race to human beings created in God's own divine image. We have judged God's beautiful diversity by our flawed and artificial standards. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

We have used language and images in ways that equate *black* and *dark* with dirt and sin, and that fail to welcome the treasures of darkness in God's good creation. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

We have accepted practices in our churches and in our society that privilege whiteness over diversity and equity. We have been complicit in how racism continues to exclude and harm people of color. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

When one part of the body of Christ hurts, the whole body hurts. As we listen to people who are harmed by racism, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we reflect on our daily interactions with people and communities of color, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we reconsider what we have been taught about race and racism, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we contemplate what we have done and what we have left undone, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we labor to create a loving and safe community for our siblings of color, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

Holy and merciful God, as your people we recommit ourselves to loving one another as you have loved us. Prepare us for this time of listening and discovery. We pray in the name of the one who has made us one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(All Creation Sings, pp. 62-63)

Additional Prayers

O God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your own image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of *our Asian siblings and* people around the world; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. *(Adapted from Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly, p.398)*

O God, you form all humanity to bear your divine image, and you intend for everyone to live together in harmonious dignity. We pray for all people, whether ourselves or others, who suffer the cruelties of racial or ethnic prejudice. Grant your Spirit of power to all who are oppressed. Give healing to victims of violence, protection to the vulnerable and abused, better housing and worthy employment to the mistreated, courage to the fearful, a remedy for rage, strength to parents and caregivers, and hope to children and youth. Purge the privileged of their sense of superiority, and lead church and society to foster communities of equity and diversity; through Jesus Christ, our loving Savior.

Amen. *(All Creation Sings, p. 50)*

O God, in your divine mystery you embrace difference in unity, and you call your people to live in peace with all. We pray for an end to racial and ethnic prejudice. Free us from the dread of difference. Free the church from constricting traditions. Free our society from centuries of violence against the other. Break down the walls that separate your people by color, culture, or religion. Call us to repentance for our sins of racism and prejudice, known and unknown. Transform discrimination into a passion for justice. Guide us to nurture a society that embodies reconciliation and cooperation among all, for the sake of the one who embodies your love, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen. *(All Creation Sings, p. 51)*

Suggested Hymns and Songs

Hymns and songs do not necessarily have to come from Asian sources; stressing these may accentuate a sense of “the other” or “foreign.” Some examples of hymns from Asian sources are highlighted, as are other suggestions that highlight building community and care for our neighbor. Having a mixture would be good. If using hymns of Asian origin, consider those that easily taught and sung in your context.

Hymns from Asian sources

- ELW 158 Kyrie, *Lim Swee Hong*
ELW 247 Come Now, O Prince of Peace / *Ososō, ososō, text and music by Yi Kōn-yong*
ELW 530 Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather / *Sekai no tomo to te o tsunagi, a hymn by Tokuo Yamaguchi and Isao Koizumi*
ELW 718 In a Lowly Manger Born, *Japanese, text by Kō Yūki, music by Seigi Abe*
ACS 965 The Rice of Life, *music by I-to-Loh*
ACS 1072 Abba, Abba, Hear Us, *Korean traditional*
ACS 1076 Search Me, O God, *text and music by I-to-Loh*
STB 248 Deep in the Human Heart, *Philippines*
STB 265 Call Me by My Name, *powerful lament from Singapore*

Additional hymns and songs

- ELW 641 All Are Welcome
ACS 1036 Commonwealth Is God’s Commandment
ACS 1037 Christ, Our Peace
ACS 1038 God, We Gather as Your People / *For All the Children*

In addition to the hymns and songs suggested above, assembly song under the headings of “Confession, Forgiveness”; “Community in Christ”; “Lament”; and “Justice, Peace” in ELW and ACS may be especially appropriate.

ELW: *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*

ACS: *All Creation Sings*

STB: *Sound the Bamboo*. Second edition. Christian Conference of Asia, 2000.

Copyright © 2021 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

This document may be reproduced for use in your congregation as long as the copyright notice appears on each copy. Permission is granted to reproduce this material for local, non-sale use only.