

LRJ Reads

Beginning in August, 2020, L4RJ began a reading campaign directed at children in LCMS parochial schools.⁵ Members of LCMS churches read children's picture books on camera in the style of LeVar Burton's "Reading Rainbow". These storybooks were on subjects of racial (Black/Indigenous/People Of Color, or "BIPOC") issues.⁵

Contributors included notable names in the LCMS such as:

- Dr. John Nunes, former president of Concordia College New York
- Shelly Schwalm, Director of the DCE program at Concordia St. Paul
- Deaconess Janine Bolling, blogger at Concordia Publishing House (CPH) and co-host of "The (Im)partial Church", a Lutheran Hour Ministries program about diversity, inclusion, and equality
- Brandon Li, Director of Music at Redeemer Redwood City and cofounder of the praise band "Tribe and Tongue"
- and others⁵

National Youth Gathering

L4RJ played a prominent role in the 2022 LCMS Youth Gathering in Austin, TX. Not only were the two founders present, handing out L4RJ buttons to participants, but many of their contributors were also leaders of the event.⁶

- Sarah Salzberg, wife of founder Joshua Salzberg, was one of 2 members of the task force that determined the theme of the event.⁷

- Brandon Li's group, Tribe and Tongue, served as the official praise band, which led nightly worship for the event.⁸
- Bible Study Leaders for the event included L4RJ contributors: Rev. Dr. Gerard Bolling (Diversity/Inclusion/Equity officer for Concordia Austin), Sarah Crowder (teacher of theology at Faith Lutheran High School in Las Vegas), Chad Janetzki (teacher of theology at Martin Luther High School near Milwaukee), Shelly Schwalm (see previous section), as well as L4RJ promoters: Rev. Gabe Kasper (pastor at University Lutheran Chapel at the University of Michigan), and Emily Stooksbury, DCE.^{5,9,10}
- Breakout Session Leaders for the event included L4RJ contributors: Rev. Nicholas Gonzalez (brother to L4RJ founder Matthew), Deaconess Janine Bolling (see previous section), Rev. Ken Chitwood, and Rev. Keith Haney.^{10,11}

Current Projects

Most recently, L4RJ has hosted a town hall with LCMS presidential candidate for 2023: Patrick Ferry. This discussion included questions about how the LCMS can promote racial justice in our churches and fight racism inside the LCMS.¹²

Further Resources to Learn About L4RJ's Goals and Beliefs

lutheransforracialjustice.com

youtube.com/@lutheransforracialjustice3358

twitter.com/L4RacialJustice

facebook.com/L4RacialJustice

What is: Lutherans for Racial Justice?



Lutherans for Racial Justice (L4RJ) is a racial activism organization directed at members of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS). Their aim is to promote the goals of Wokism and cultural Marxism within the LCMS, namely: Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity.¹

History

L4RJ began operations of June 19th (“Juneteenth”), 2020, following the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the ensuing riots carried out by activists at the direction of groups like Black Lives Matter (BLM).²

On this date they began circulating a petition on the website Change.org, calling for the LCMS and its members to repent of their systemic racism.³ As the petition says:

Throughout its history, our church body has made efforts toward racial equality, but it has also been an impediment, and at times, a hostile opponent to those causes.

While we refuse to closet past transgressions, we are not here to relentlessly flog ourselves nor our leaders. Driven by fervent hope, we faithfully believe the people of the LCMS have the opportunity, capacity and influence to lead the Church and nation in taking actions for equality, justice, and reconciliation.

With all this in mind, the signers of this statement humbly:

CONFESS that our thoughts, words, and deeds have created, deepened, and sustained the lasting wounds of racial prejudice, inequality, and injustice -- by what we have done and by what we have left undone, we repent.

DECLARE an intent to, by God’s grace, dismantle the systems of racism within our congregations, communities, and church body. Our work for racial equality does not end with this statement, but rather begins. We will aim to honor the humanity of our black and brown neighbors by listening, learning, and moving towards faithful action in the decision making process of our church, city and Synod, inviting the accountability of fellowship when we fall short.

PLEDGE SUPPORT, in word, deed, and resources, to RAISE UP future black leaders, as well as seeking out opportunities to ELEVATE & AMPLIFY current Black Lutheran voices (donating to [The Institute of Black Lutheran Studies & Center for Social Justice](#) is a great place to start).³

Leadership

L4RJ is operated by its two founders:¹

Rev. Matthew Gonzalez
Pastor at Trinity
Evangelical Lutheran
Church in NY



Joshua Salzberg
Congregational
President at First
Lutheran Church in
Culver City, CA



Black Clergy Caucus

In addition to their petition for racial justice in the Synod, L4RJ has partnered with the Black Clergy Caucus (BCC) of the LCMS, led by Rev. Warren Lattimore, to raise money for the Institute of Black Lutheran Studies & Center for Social Justice.⁴

Their donation campaign, likewise begun on June 19, 2020, is advertised as follows:⁴

You’re heartbroken by the violence you’ve been seeing.

You want to do your part to confront systemic racism.

BUT HOW?

Start by helping us build a curriculum to raise up a new generation of racially inclusive and culturally sensitive clergy, church workers, and community leaders. The Institute of Black Lutheran Studies and Center for Social Justice offers the opportunity for people of all vocations to study Black-American history, thought, and identity, especially in the Lutheran tradition, and to put that study into action.