

R-1: Addressing Anti-Semitism in Lectionary Readings

WHEREAS, anti-Semitic words, deeds, and attitudes do real harm to our Jewish neighbors, and

WHEREAS, the ELCA has repudiated anti-Semitism and expressed its desire to live in “love and respect for the Jewish people” (Declaration to the Jewish Community, 1994), and

WHEREAS, passages of the New Testament which can be interpreted as anti-Jewish or supercessionist (i.e. supporting the idea that God has rejected the Jews) are included in our lectionary, and

WHEREAS, in the time in which the New Testament was written, the word Ἰουδαῖοι (ee-oo-DIE-oy), was used as a marker of geographic and ethnic identity (that is, it denoted people from Judaea as distinct from Galilee, Samaria, or other parts of the world) and “Israelite” was used to identify the people who worshiped the God of Israel wherever they lived, that is the people whom we today would identify as “Jewish,” and

WHEREAS, the word “Jews” in the New Testament is usually an inaccurate translation of the Greek Ἰουδαῖοι, and

WHEREAS, the preferred translation used by Augsburg Fortress is the NRSV, which uses the inaccurate and potentially harmful translation “Jews” in almost every instance;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the preachers and teachers of the Northern Illinois Synod be encouraged to address the issues of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish theology (such as the teaching that the Jewish people are responsible for the death of Jesus and/or the idea that God has rejected the Jews); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that preachers, teachers, and lectors of the Northern Illinois Synod be encouraged, when reading in public, to substitute a more appropriate translation of Ἰουδαῖοι where the English translation uses the word “Jews.” Examples include “Judeans,” “Religious Leaders,” and “locals;” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northern Illinois Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to forward this resolution to the Church Council’s Executive Committee for referral and disposition to the appropriate unit or office of the churchwide organization in accordance with the bylaws and continuing resolutions of this church in order to address the issues of anti-Jewish language in our lectionary and teaching materials.

Contact Person: Rev. Brant Clements

Submitted by: Rev. Brant Clements, Rev. Andrew Kayes, Rev. Theresa Wilder, Rev. Carol Soderholm, Rev. Vicki Sauter, Rev. Roger Asplund, Rev. Susan

Davenport, Rev. Jacob Gawlik, Rev. Scott Ralston, Rev. Josh Ehrler, Rev. Kathy Burkheimer, Rev. Makayla Dahleen and Rev. Bree Truax.

Action of the Resolution Committee: Recommend Adoption of the Resolution
Date of Action: May 1, 2021

Northern Illinois Synod
Anticipated Synod Implementation Analysis
(Please attach this resource impact reporting form to each Resolution submitted)

Resolution Title: Addressing Anti-Semitism in Lectionary Readings

Anticipated Financial Implications of resolution if adopted for:

Synod Organization: \$0.00

Congregations: \$0.00

Anticipated staff or personnel implications of resolution if adopted for:

Synod Organization: Members of Synod staff, committees, and task forces will be expected to be aware of potentially anti-Semitic interpretations of New Testament texts and to use appropriate substitute language in public readings of the New Testament. Synod staff will also be encouraged to address the problems of anti-Semitism

Congregations: Rostered and lay leaders will be expected to be aware of potentially anti-Semitic interpretations of New Testament texts and to use appropriate substitute language in public readings of the New Testament. Congregational leaders will also be encouraged to address the problems of anti-Semitism in appropriate forums.
