

A BASIC TOOL

## Defining Racism

### **HELPFUL HISTORY**

The mandate for Women of the ELCA's anti-racism efforts and cross-cultural programming goes back to legislative action of the 1993 Triennial Convention, where anti-racism education was affirmed and requested.

The 1993–1996 executive board took action that called for ongoing programs and strategy to help us become more cross-cultural and understand anti-racism. The 1996 Triennial Convention specifically requested education in institutional racism. The 1999 Triennial Convention directed that anti-racism education be continued as a priority through 2002 and become an organizational principle.

The 2002 Triennial Convention adopted wording that made anti-racism part of the constitution of Women of the ELCA as an organizational principle. At this same convention, stronger language claiming an anti-racist identity was introduced for action at the 2005 Triennial Convention.

### **USE**

Use this appetizer to lay out the various yet interrelated definitions for racism. Cut-and-paste it (perhaps along with the White Skin Privilege appetizer) into a separate document to make a handout for your TDTR presentations. It (along with WSP) would make a good poster or overhead as well.

## Defining Racism

The following statements are all defining statements:

- ☞ Racism is a systemic issue. It is racial prejudice plus the power of societal systems to enforce it, thereby maintaining collective power, favor, and access for white people and keeping collective power, favor, and access from people of color.
- ☞ Racism is built into our institutions and culture today.
- ☞ Racism is racial prejudice plus the power of institutions and systems to support that prejudice.
- ☞ Racism is prejudice plus power.
- ☞ Racism is racial prejudice plus institutional power plus white skin privilege.
- ☞ While racism does affect individual actions, effective solutions escape us if we do not address the powerful, historical socialization and white privilege that characterize our institutions and our culture.
- ☞ Racism is “power over.”