

A Letter from Bishops of the ELCA to the Church

“On Hope and Action”

October 8, 2025

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Beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we write to you in this moment of national and global tension with clarity and conviction. Our faith compels us to stand where Jesus stands—with and for those whom society often seeks to exclude, erase, or diminish.

Our shared confession that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) grounds us in the conviction that all people possess inherent dignity. The incarnation of Jesus Christ reveals God’s profound solidarity with humanity—especially with those who are marginalized or oppressed. The gospel we proclaim insists that our neighbor’s need is the occasion for our love and that our public life is shaped by justice, mercy, and a commitment to the common good.

Further, we have a shared tradition in our social teachings which grounds us. The ELCA’s Social Message on Immigration reminds us:

“We are to respond to newcomers as we would to Christ—welcoming them, meeting their immediate needs, and advocating for justice in our laws and policies.”

Likewise, our recently adopted Social Statement Faith and Civic Life affirms that Christians are called to be “a public witness, holding leaders accountable when they fail to protect the vulnerable.”

We are living through a time when vulnerable communities are being scapegoated and attacked. Immigrants and refugees are vilified, though Scripture commands us to welcome the stranger. People of color continue to bear the devastating weight of racism woven into the fabric of our society. Transgender people, beloved by God, are being targeted with laws and rhetoric that deny their dignity and even their right to exist. These assaults on our siblings are not political abstractions—they are deep wounds in the body of Christ.

In this time of division and fear, we, as people grounded in our faith, insist on love. This commitment flows from our faith in Christ crucified and risen—the One whose love breaks down barriers, confronts hatred, and transforms hearts.

Love insists on the dignity of every human being.

Love insists on justice for the marginalized and oppressed.

Love insists that the church must reflect God’s diverse, life-giving community.

Love insists that we listen, speak, and act with respect, even in disagreement.

Love insists on hope, trusting that God’s kingdom of justice and peace will prevail.

This love also compels us to speak clearly against Christian Nationalism, which our Churchwide Assembly named as a distortion of the Christian faith and an unhealthy form of patriotism. Christian Nationalism confuses the Gospel with political power, turns God into a mascot for the state, and privileges some people over others based on race, religion, or birthplace. This is not the way of Jesus. The kingdom of God is not a nation, not a culture, not a political ideology—it is God's reign of love, justice, and mercy for all people.

Therefore, as bishops of this church, we declare that the ELCA cannot be silent. Our call is clear:

- To proclaim the God-given dignity of every human being.
- To resist systems and ideologies, including Christian Nationalism, that oppress, dehumanize, or erase.
- To stand shoulder to shoulder with those who are targeted or harmed.

To bear public witness that the love of Christ is stronger than fear, stronger than hatred, and stronger than death.

We call on all members of the ELCA to join us in prayer, advocacy, and action:

- Pray for those who are vulnerable and for all who work for justice.
- Advocate in your communities, legislatures, and Congress for laws that protect migrants, advance racial justice, and safeguard LGBTQIA+ people.
- Engage in the holy work of hospitality, creating spaces of safety, affirmation, and belonging for all God's children.
- Model respectful dialogue in a polarized world, seeking understanding rooted in love.

Hold fast to hope, trusting that the Spirit is still at work renewing creation and reconciling the world to God.

In baptism, we are marked with the cross of Christ forever. That cross is not only a sign of our hope—it is also a summons to follow Jesus into solidarity with those who suffer.

In the power of the Spirit, let us be bold. Let us be faithful. Let us Insist on Love—in our words, our actions, our public witness, and our life together.

Together in Christ,

Bishop Susan J. Briner - Southwestern Texas Synod, Bishop Becca Middeke-Conlin - Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, Bishop Vivian Davila - Caribbean Synod, Bishop Donna Simon - Central States Synod, Bishop Bill Gohl - Delaware-Maryland Synod, Bishop Anne Edison-Albright - East Central Synod of Wisconsin, Bishop Pedro Suarez - Florida-Bahamas Synod, Bishop Deborah Hutterer - Grand Canyon Synod, Bishop Paul Erickson - Greater Milwaukee Synod, Bishop Felix Malpica - La Crosse Area Synod, Bishop Stephen R. Herr - Lower Susquehanna Synod, Bishop Wayne Miller - Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Bishop Katrina D. Foster - Metropolitan New York Synod, Bishop Philip C. Hirsch - Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod, Bishop Jen Nagel - Minneapolis Area Synod, Bishop Scott Alan Johnson - Nebraska Synod, Bishop Nathan Pihlo - New England Synod, Bishop Christa Compton - New Jersey Synod, Bishop Emily K. Hartner - North Carolina Synod, Bishop Julie Schneider-Thomas - North/West Lower Michigan Synod, Bishop Kevin Jones - Northeastern Iowa Synod, Bishop Amy Odgren - Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Bishop Laura Barbins - Northeastern Ohio Synod, Bishop Christopher deForest - Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Bishop Katherine Finegan - Northern Great Lakes Synod, Bishop Stacie Fidler - Northern Illinois Synod, Bishop Erik Gronberg - Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, Bishop Meggan Manlove - Northwest Intermountain Synod, Bishop Martin Halom - Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee - Northwest Washington Synod, Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin - Northwestern Ohio Synod, Bishop Kristen Papson - Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Bishop Laurie Larson Caesar - Oregon Synod, Bishop David Nagler - Pacifica Synod, Bishop Meghan Johnston Aelabouni - Rocky Mountain Synod, Bishop Jeff R. Johnson - Sierra Pacific Synod, Bishop Ginny Aebischer - South Carolina Synod, Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe - South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Bishop Amy Current - Southeastern Iowa Synod, Bishop Bryan Penman - Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Bishop Brenda Bos - Southwest California Synod, Bishop Melissa L. Stoller - Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Bishop Keith Marshall - Southwestern Washington, Bishop Tracey Breashears Schultz - Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, Bishop Craig Miller - Upper Susquehanna Synod, Bishop Lee M. Miller II - Upstate New York Synod, Bishop Phyllis Milton - Virginia Synod, Bishop Scott Dalen - Western Iowa Synod