



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

July 20, 2016

My soul is bereft of peace: I have forgotten what happiness is. (Lamentations 3:17)

Too often in the past months we have been stunned by violence. Last Sunday in Baton Rouge, La., and earlier this month in Dallas, police were the target. Many in our congregations serve in law enforcement. These are our brothers and sisters, children of God who dedicate their lives to keeping our communities safe, who risk their lives for strangers.

Acts of violence, at home and abroad, are all too frequent. Each is evidence of a broken world. Lutherans understand this and believe that the state has the authority and obligation to protect its citizens. Good government and peace are among the things we ask for when we pray "Give us today our daily bread."

Not all citizens have the same experience with law enforcement. We are working on that as a nation and a church. But the targeting and assassination of police officers is a threat to all of us. Nothing is solved by this violence.

Working in law enforcement is an honorable way to live one's baptismal vocation. Many of us know police who are members of our congregations. They serve with dedication to the common good even at the risk of their lives. Police and other first responders see the best and the worst of human nature, and they do that on your behalf and mine.

Officers killed in the line of duty leave behind families, comrades and friends. We continue to hold those who mourn in our prayers. But a little bit of us has died too. "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (I Corinthians 12:26).

Although broken, our world is also a redeemed one. God's answer to hatred and violence is the love and life revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. In Christ, God reconciles the world to God's self. We are called to that ministry of healing and reconciliation in our hearts, in our homes and in our communities. God is ever faithful. We are held as one people in God's love and that love will never let us go.

But this I call to mind, and therefore have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning (Lamentations 3:21-23)

In Christ's peace,

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America