



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

*My enemies trample on me all day long, for many fight against me. O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me? (Psalm 56:2-4).*

As a nation, we continue to witness and suffer from the cruelties of racial and gender-based violence. In recent days, we have witnessed the horror of gun violence in Atlanta and the vandalism of one of our ELCA congregations in Seattle.

As church we grieve the mass shooting in Atlanta, Ga., that took the lives of eight people, six of them Asian women. As church we join Bishop Kevin Strickland of the Southeastern Synod in observing that “God has called us to become the beloved community that God created where all are valued and honored. We then are called through the waters of our baptism to strive for justice and peace in all the world, for all.”

Naming the victims’ gender and race matters. Women of color live at the intersection of racism and sexism and do not get to choose oppressions. The ELCA social message “Gender-based Violence” (2015) teaches that “gender-based violence is a global evil that marks millions of lives” (2). A white male killing six Asian American women is a racist and gender-based act of violence. Over the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in anti-Asian racism and violent attacks, fueled by hate speech and racist political rhetoric. The organization Stop AAPI Hate has [tracked](#) 3,795 hate incident reports from Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. Women constituted 68% of the victims, with many reporting instances of sexual harassment and sexual and physical abuse. Reports of escalating violence do not stop in the United States — they are global.

For the Asian community, fear of violence affects daily life. This week Grace Chinese Lutheran Church in Seattle was targeted with a racist message scrawled on the driveway of its property. Responding to this incident, Shelley Bryan Wee, bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod, said, “The violence that is being done against people of Asian descent is heartrending and blasphemous. We are mindful that people are being injured and even killed in the name of bigotry.”

As church, let us affirm the words of Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms: “A crime against any community is a crime against us all.” As church, we condemn the sins of racism, sexism and xenophobia in all their forms. As church, we lift up and pray for the support and protection of Grace Chinese Lutheran and its pastors, Jimmy Hao and Wendy Chew. We declare solidarity with our Asian American siblings; we lament with the families that lost loved ones in the shootings; we remember our neighbors working on the frontlines of the pandemic; and we seek ways to support organizations that combat racial violence against all communities. This violence and aggression must stop.

I invite you to watch this [video](#) in which members of the Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders-ELCA share the “Embodied Blessing and Healing” prayer, part of the litany for the church’s day of lament for anti-Asian racism.

O God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your own image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of our Asian siblings and people around the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (Adapted from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly.*)

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America