

## STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Our children and youth are like a young Jeremiah prophesying to the people: *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”* (Jeremiah 29:11).

Recently, the students, faculty and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., experienced tragedy. Seventeen people - students and teachers - were killed by a 19-year-old shooter. In response, students have invited their teachers, families and allies around the nation to join with them for a March for Our Lives on March 24, 2018, in Washington, D.C.; calling our country into a deeper conversation about school safety and Second Amendment rights and responsibilities.

We recognize this incident is the latest in a long list of tragic shootings in our country and young people have been calling for protest and change for many years. Some of those young voices have been ignored or silenced because of racial and economic injustice. We cannot let that reality keep us from acting now.

Adopted in 1994, the ELCA social message on “Community Violence” remains sadly relevant today. The message speaks about the causes of violence as complex and pervasive, and of how violence breeds violence. In proclaiming the forgiveness and love of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church addresses the root of violence while being committed to social actions that respond directly to violence and the people it affects.

From the social message: *In the face of violence, God’s resolve for peace in human communities is unshakable. Deliberate acts to harm or kill innocent people violate God’s intention for human community. God’s commandment is “You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13). In proclaiming God’s law, we declare that all people are accountable before God and the community to honor and respect the life God has given. Christians, as salt of the earth (Mt. 5:13) and light of the world (Mt. 5:14), are called to respond to violent crime in the restorative ways taught by Jesus (Mt. 5:38-39) and shown by his actions (Jn. 8:3-11). We are empowered to take up the challenge to prevent violence and to attack the complex causes that make violence so pervasive.*

*According to Lutheran theology, society is to be ruled by the civil use of the Law. Government is responsible under God for the protection of its citizens and the maintenance of justice and public order. As citizens in a democracy, we have the responsibility to join with others to hold government accountable for protecting society and ensuring justice for all, and to seek changes in policies and practices toward these ends.*

That social message was amplified by a social statement, “For Peace in God’s World” (1995), which, as part of its adoption, offered concrete implementation actions, including: *To call upon the members and leaders of this church to support our youth in their struggle to define their identity and vocation as present and future peacemakers....*

The Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in solidarity with our children and youth, and in response to our common baptismal vocation - living among God’s faithful people, hearing the word of God and sharing in the Lord’s Supper, proclaiming the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serving all people following the example of Jesus, and striving for justice and peace in all the earth - offer our support, partnership and prayers for the March for Our Lives, its satellite city events, and our children and youth who are leading us forward as peacemakers.

The undersigned members have given their names in public and personal support of the statement.

The Rev. Thomas M. Aitken, Bishop  
Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Abraham D. Allende, Bishop  
Northeastern Ohio Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Jon Anderson, Bishop  
Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Jim Arends, Bishop  
La Crosse Area Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, Bishop  
New Jersey Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Daniel G. Beaudoin, Bishop  
Northwestern Ohio Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Wm. Chris Boerger, Secretary  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Terry A. Brandt, Bishop  
North Dakota Synod, ELCA

The Rev. David H. Brauer-Rieke, Bishop  
Oregon Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Claire Schenot Burkat, Bishop  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Michael Burk, Bishop  
Southeastern Iowa Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Jeffrey Clements, Bishop  
Northern Illinois Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Barbara J. Collins, Bishop  
Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Jessica Crist, Bishop  
Montana Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Steven H. Delzer, Bishop  
Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt, Bishop  
Southern Ohio Synod, ELCA

The Rev. James Dunlop, Bishop  
Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA

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

The Rev. Paul D. Erickson, Bishop  
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA

The Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Bishop  
Southwest California Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Katherine Finegan, Bishop  
Northern Great Lakes Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Mary Froiland, Bishop  
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA

The Rev. William O. Gafkjen, Bishop  
Indiana-Kentucky Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Mike Girlinghouse, Bishop  
Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, ELCA

The Rev. William Gohl Jr., Bishop  
Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Jim Gonia, Bishop  
Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA

The Rev. H. Julian Gordy, Bishop  
Southeastern Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Richard H. Graham, Bishop  
Metropolitan Washington, DC Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Erik K. J. Gronberg, Bishop  
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod,  
ELCA

The Rev. Roger Gustafson, Bishop  
Central States Synod, ELCA

The Rev. James Hazelwood, Bishop  
New England Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop  
Sierra Pacific Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Rick Hoyme, Bishop  
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA

The Rev. Robert F. Humphrey, Bishop  
Virginia Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Rick Jaech, Bishop  
Southwestern Washington Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Ralph E. Jones, Bishop  
Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Donald Kreiss, Bishop  
Southeast Michigan Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Kristen E.M. Kuempel, Bishop  
Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Wilma Kucharek, Bishop  
Slovak Zion Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow, Bishop  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Felipe Lozada-Montanez, Bishop  
Caribbean Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Patricia Lull, Bishop  
St. Paul Area Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Brian Maas, Bishop  
Nebraska Synod, ELCA

The Rev. John S. Macholz, Bishop  
Upstate New York Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Gerald L. Mansholt  
East Central Synod of Wisconsin

The Rev. Donald J. McCoid, Interim Bishop  
Metropolitan New York Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Wayne N. Miller, Bishop  
Metropolitan Chicago Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Rodger G. Prois, Bishop  
Western Iowa Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Michael Rinehart, Bishop  
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Michael L. Rhyne, Bishop  
Allegheny Synod, ELCA

The Rev. S. John Roth, Bishop  
Central/Southern Illinois Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Bishop  
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Timothy M. Smith, Bishop  
North Carolina Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Pedro Suarez, Bishop  
Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Ann Svenningsen, Bishop  
Minneapolis Area Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Andrew A. Taylor, Bishop  
Pacifica Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Ray Tiemann, Bishop  
Southwestern Texas Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Kirby Unti, Bishop  
Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Steven L. Ullestad, Bishop  
Northeastern Iowa Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Shelley R. Wickstrom, Bishop  
Alaska Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Lawrence R. Wohlrabe, Bishop  
Northwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Herman Yoos, Bishop  
South Carolina Synod, ELCA

The Rev. Samuel R. Zeiser, Bishop  
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

The Rev. David B. Zellmer, Bishop  
South Dakota Synod, ELCA