



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

December 30, 2019

Today is the last day of Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. As our Jewish siblings lighted the menorah, they sang this blessing:

*We kindle these lights because of the wondrous deliverance You performed for our ancestors. During these eight days of Hanukkah, these lights are sacred; we are not to use them but only to behold them, so that their glow may rouse us to give thanks for Your wondrous acts of deliverance.*

Tragically, several acts of anti-Semitic hatred, bigotry and violence in New York during these days have marred the joyful festivities in Jewish communities across this country and around the world. Within the last year, we have witnessed the broader surge of anti-Semitism from Pittsburgh to Poway in which these most recent incidents have occurred. Our Jewish neighbors are living in pain, grief and fear.

Twenty-five years ago, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America joined other Lutheran Christians worldwide in repudiating anti-Judaism within our own tradition. In our 1994 "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community" we affirmed that "we recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us."

This will require more of us than repeated statements. It will require building bridges of inter-religious understanding in our communities. It will require reaching out to our Jewish neighbors to offer our care, support, love and protection. It will require our persistence in addressing the root causes of anti-Semitism and its menacing companions of white supremacy and xenophobia.

In different ways, and for different reasons, this is a time of year when Jews and Christians celebrate the miracle of light. In our prayers and actions, may we be a living presence of God's sacred light that rouses us all to resistance and righteousness.

In peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop, ELCA  
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