

October 8, 2025

A Letter from Bishops of the ELCA to the Church

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 Kevin Strickland
Bishop Susan J. Briner
Bishop Becca Middeke-Conlin
Bishop Vivian Davila
Bishop Donna Simon
Bishop Bill Gohl
Bishop Anne Edison-Albright
Bishop Pedro Suarez
Bishop Deborah Hutterer

Southeastern Synod
Southwestern Texas Synod
Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod
Caribbean Synod
Central States Synod
Delaware-Maryland Synod
East Central Synod of Wisconsin
Florida-Bahamas Synod
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 Piphio	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 PA 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



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