



Dear Friends –

Our hearts are heavy with the news of the horrific act of violence at Annunciation Church and School in Minneapolis on Wednesday morning. As many of our children return to the places where they learn and socialize with friends in what we conceive of as safe places of growth and development, it is heart-wrenching to hear that the violence that plagues our nation has found its way into the very sanctuaries we hold sacred. We encourage you to join other ELCA congregations this Sunday in remembering those children who were killed, those who continue to heal, and for all who have been impacted by this senseless act.

In Christ,

Bishop Regina Hassanally, Southeastern Minnesota Synod - ELCA

Bishop Patricia Lull, Saint Paul Area Synod - ELCA

Bishop Jen Nagel, Minneapolis Area Synod - ELCA

Bishop Amy Odgren, Northeastern Minnesota Synod - ELCA

Bishop Dee Pederson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod - ELCA

Bishop Bill Tesch, Northwestern Minnesota Synod - ELCA

## **In a time of tragedy and violence**

When we have no words to express our grief, Scripture gives voice to our pain and anger and sadness:

*“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”* – Matthew 2:18.

This summer has been book-ended by attacks and shootings. The horrific killing of little children yet again is more than our minds can absorb. We grieve with the families whose hearts are broken as they mourn. We pray for so many others who were gathered in a church for the first Mass of the new school year. Little children. Praying. In a church. Violence like this rips our hearts and tears at our spirits. We weep and seek to be those who work for the safety of every child created in the image of God. We ask God to hear our cries of despair, heed our calls for justice, and not let us lose hope.

As you prepare for worship this week, please hold in prayer the families, victims, and all who are part of Annunciation Catholic Church, as well as those who responded to this crisis or offered medical care. Please receive the prayers below as a resource and feel free to adapt for your setting.

The ELCA’s Social Message, “Gun-related Violence” reminds us that “Persisting violence erodes social capital, impairs social networks, and breeds hopelessness...” This is a helpful resource for study and conversation as we struggle with how to respond to such shocking violence and move forward with courage and strength. You can access the social message here [Gun\\_Related\\_Violence\\_Social\\_Message.pdf](#)

**Prayer of the Day:**

For those in trouble or bereavement Almighty God, your love never fails, and you can turn the shadow of death into daybreak. Help us to receive your word with believing hearts, so that, confident in your promises, we may have hope and be lifted out of sorrow into the joy and peace of your presence; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW p. 84)

How long, O Lord,  
how long shall the wicked triumph?  
**They bluster in their insolence;  
all evildoers are full of boasting.**

*from Psalm 94*

They crush your people, O Lord,  
and afflict your very own.  
**They kill the widow and the stranger  
and put the orphans to death.**

Yet you will not abandon your people,  
nor will you forsake your very own.  
**If the Lord had not been my help,  
I should soon have dwelt in the land of silence.**

As often as I said, "My foot has slipped,"  
your steadfast love, O LORD, upheld me.  
**The LORD has become my stronghold,  
my God is my rock of refuge.**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;  
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,  
and the sea was no more.  
**And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,  
coming down out of heaven from God.**

*from Revelation 21*

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
"See, the home of God is among mortals.  
**God will dwell with them,  
and they will be God's people.**

God will be with them  
and will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
**Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away."**

And the one who was seated on the throne said,  
"See, I am making all things new.  
I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the beginning and the end.  
**To the thirsty I will give water  
as a gift from the spring of the water of life."**

## **Prayer**

God, giver of life, you intend for humans to live together in peace. In this time of grief over gun violence, we pray for your presence among us. That, trusting in your mighty and gentle healing, we may live in hope, we pray: **make us instruments of your peace.**

God of resurrection, we remember before you those who have died at Annunciation Church and School in Minneapolis. We commend them to your eternal love. Grant healing and wholeness to the survivors who are wounded or traumatized, and restore all whose spirits are maimed by such violence. That we may serve as your arms of care to those in distress, we pray: **make us instruments of your peace.**

God of righteousness, you have laid on our elected leaders the responsibility to protect our land. Strengthen their devotion to our common life, and guide legislators to enact policies that address our plague of gun violence. That our government may support our search for domestic harmony, we pray: **make us instruments of your peace.**

God of compassion, we give you thanks for first responders, for police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and all who offer compassionate aid in situations of tragedy. Keep them safe from harm, and give them courage and sound judgment as they act. That we may join in support of those who risk their lives for others, we pray: **make us instruments of your peace.**

God of mercy, with your grace, transform those who from malice or illness inflict violence on others. Believing in your power to make all things new, we pray: **make us instruments of your peace.**

God of the promise in word and sacrament, we pray for the church. Give us a voice, your voice, to plead for a society marked by justice and sustained by cooperation among diverse peoples. Train us to resist the lure of brute force. That by your Spirit we may become words and signs of your mercy, we pray: **make us instruments of your peace.**

God of true might and redemptive mercy, receive our prayers, and grant us to become your instruments of peace. Our help comes from you, O Lord. In the midst of grief, you are our comfort. In the face of uncertainty, you are our rock. In the wake of tragedy, you are our hope. So even as we weep, we place our trust in you. We pray in the name of the one who suffered and died and was raised for us, our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## **Blessing**

Go out into the world in peace;  
have courage;  
hold on to what is good;  
return no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the fainthearted;  
support the weak, and help the suffering;  
honor all people;  
love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**