



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 2018

Dear Member of Congress:

As Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a denomination of 3.5 million, I mourn the horrific deaths of students and teachers following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. My heart grieves for the lives forever altered; the injured and their communities, and for the perpetrator and his family.

I urge you to work together to increase safety in our nation's communities by preventing the easy access to assault style weapons and strengthening our system of federal background checks.

Throughout the ongoing epidemic of mass shootings in schools, churches, nightclubs and public venues, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has resolved as a national denomination to urge that you act swiftly to renew the Federal Assault Weapons Ban. This includes a definition of assault weapons comparable to that in the renewal attempt of the Assault Weapons Ban bill of 2013.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has long supported responsible management of gun purchases, such as background checks for all gun sales. In 1993, our Churchwide Assembly passed a social policy resolution that called the entire church “to work for the passage and strict enforcement of local, state, and national legislation as appropriate, that rigidly controls the manufacture, importation, exportation, sale, purchase, transfer, receipt, possession or transportation of handguns, assault weapons, and assault-like weapons and their parts, excluding rifles and shotguns used for hunting and sporting purposes, for use other than law enforcement and military purposes.”

The tragedy in Parkland took place on Ash Wednesday, the day that begins the Christian Lenten season of repentance and renewal. Our lament in this moment moves us to do what is necessary to make Parkland the last mass shooting in the United States. This urgency is underscored by our 2016 Churchwide Assembly Memorial resolution on Gun Violence Prevention that states our resolve to make our communities and children safer through improvements in gun laws and policies.

We ask God to guide our nation in finding new ways to reduce violence and promote peace and wholeness for all people. To that end, I ask for your swift action for renewal of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban and by ensuring responsible management of gun sales. Thank you for your service in Congress and to our nation.

Sincerely,

Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America