



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

A Statement on the Killing of Tyre Nichols

January 20, 2023

“Christians in their longing for Christ find themselves deeply immersed in the sufferings of the world. Christians are not aloof spectators, watching the world’s troubles. ... [F]aith leads us into solidarity with suffering.” —ELCA social statement, *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013)

As the nation watches another video exposing police violence against a Black man after a traffic stop, there will be great suffering and despair emerging from across the United States. In just over a week we have witnessed mass gun violence in California – twice – and the shooting of a protester at a future police training site in Atlanta. Each of these tragedies inspires grief, not only for the lives lost and forever altered but also for our loss of confidence in a system that continues to fail us, over and over.

It’s important to remember that images are powerful and can retraumatize communities. The anticipated video footage of 29-year-old Memphis resident Tyre Nichols being beaten promises to stir many emotions and reawaken the grief of tens of millions of Americans who have seen this in their own communities. It will feel personal for those who have witnessed this trauma inflicted upon their own families.

As Americans, we must all face this problem. Together we must cry out, much as Rachael wept in loud lamentation, “How long, O Lord?”

How long, O Lord, will we need to suffer at the hands of injustice?

How long, O Lord, will we hear of lives taken by another shooting and fear for our own lives and our families’ lives?

How long, O Lord, will we fear a system that is supposed to protect all lives?

Dear church, now is the time to focus, listen, learn, counsel, advocate for just reforms, and lament a grief that seems relentless, that is awoken again with each act of tragedy and injustice across this nation.

In Christ,

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

<https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8187>

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About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with 3 million members in more than 8,700 worshiping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. The ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA's roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

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