



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

Dear church,

As a nation we have lived through a very difficult two weeks following the mass shootings in Atlanta on March 16 and again in Boulder, Colo., on March 22. The shooting in Colorado was only the most recent of [104 mass shootings](#) already in 2021. Colorado has a painful history of mass shootings. Since 1993 the deadliest incidents have been the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, the mass shooting in a movie theater in Aurora and now the 10 lives taken, including the life of a responding police officer, at a supermarket in Boulder.

Together with God, we grieve with the families and communities impacted by gun violence — especially in communities where it is an everyday occurrence. These shootings are not isolated but rather a pattern of the gun violence crisis in the United States. The numbers of victims tell only a part of the pain — the trauma caused by gun violence ripples across family members, friends, neighborhoods, communities and this country.

As we near the Sunday of the Passion, we enter into the suffering of Christ and into solidarity with the sufferings of the world. As we look to the healing power of the cross, we celebrate the gift of peace through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As followers of Jesus, we are empowered to take up the challenge to prevent violence and grapple with the complex causes that make violence so pervasive.

The ELCA is a church in society [striving for peace](#) in all the world. Let us join with others in calling for greater gun safety, including preventing easy access to assault-style weapons and strengthening our federal system of background checks for all gun sales. We call for support and protection for those living out their vocations to protect and defend society, enforce the law and work toward restorative justice. We pray for rostered ministers who provide support and counseling services to those affected by gun-violence-related crimes even as we pray for the perpetrators of violent acts. We call upon congregations to hold safe space for those dealing with the fears and threats related to violence in all its manifestations.

In Christ,

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