



Pacifica Synod - ELCA

Office of the Bishop - Lutheran Center For Mission & Learning

October 2, 2017

Dear members and friends of the Pacifica Synod,

I awoke this morning in Chicago (where I am meeting with other ELCA bishops for our semi-annual Conference) to the news of the tragic and senseless shooting in Las Vegas, and the loss of lives of so many innocents. Like you, I am shocked and saddened by this event, the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history. I encourage you to be in prayer for our country, for the families of the victims, and for all who have been affected by this horrible act of carnage.

But I ask you to do more than pray. I am reminded of the words of a young adult who as a teenager was a member of one of our churches, who now no longer is a part of a community of faith. She told me she found church filled with sincere, caring people, but thought that churches prayed in order to evade responsibility for making the world a more peaceful, more just place, relying on divine intervention and not on human action. I believe God provides divine intervention through human action, that the Holy Spirit is at work through all of us to make the world more peaceful and just for all. Therefore, I encourage both prayer and action.

Specifically, I encourage the congregations, ministries, and people of the Pacifica Synod to do the following:

1. Pray for the families and victims of the shooter. Pray for a world in which gun violence is a thing of the past. Pray in gratitude for first responders, doctors, nurses, and chaplains, for the work they do. Pray for Christian congregations everywhere, and particularly for those in the ELCA and in the Pacifica Synod, that together we may find ways to respond in care and compassion.
2. Talk with one another, seeking discernment for how your congregation or community of faith might act together in the world seeking to stem violence in our neighborhoods and in the world.
3. Read together the [attached pastoral letter](#), written by the Conference of Bishops in 2013 following the school shooting at Sandy Hook. Prayerfully discuss its relevance to today's shooting.
4. Become familiar with the work of the Joint Episcopalian-Lutheran Gun Violence Prevention Task Force that consists of members of our synod and of the Southwest California synod. Utilize tools that make sense for your community of faith. For more information about this task force, contact terrirobertson@pacificasynod.org.

Finally, remember that Christ is with us, now and forever. Our God will help us stand for what brings peace to the world. May God guide us through the days and weeks ahead, and help us as the church to do our part to bring about a more peaceful, less violent world.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Bishop Andy Taylor