

Safer Together: Beyond the Gun Control Debate

A Conversation Among the People and Congregations of the ELCA in Minnesota and North Dakota

“Christian love builds powerful relations of giving and receiving that counter the isolation, despair, enmity, and nihilism that often contribute to lethal harm and criminal homicide.”
– ELCA Social Message on Gun Related Violence and Trauma

The United States continues to face an epidemic of violence and harm involving guns. Communities across our region have not been spared. Most recently, Minnesota experienced the school shooting at Annunciation and the political assassinations of Representative Hortman and her husband. Too often public debates around firearm use and misuse devolve into a standoff between personal rights and government control. This pattern fails to address the many ways that each of us can act to reduce gun-related violence and trauma in our homes, workplaces, schools, and communities. As Lutherans, how do we respond to this ongoing reality? What does our social teaching say? How might we foster the kind of moral deliberation and call to action that can lead to meaningful change? To address these questions, ELCA synods and congregations of Minnesota and North Dakota are organizing opportunities for shared learning, discernment, and collective action toward solutions to the harms of gun misuse in our unique contexts. We hope to move beyond the gun rights-gun control debate and to promote safer communities with the conviction that we are safer together.

Save the Date – October 27, 2026

On the evening of October 27th, lay leaders and rostered ministers in our region are invited to attend a presentation and conversation with Dr. Jillian Pederson, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Hamline University and the Executive Director of The Violence Prevention Project. Dr. Pederson will reflect on her research into mass shootings as a public health concern. Following her presentation, participants will discuss the ELCA's Social Message on Gun Related Violence and Trauma and the unique ways their own communities are impacted by gun violence.

This event will be available in person at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Moorhead and livestreamed for synods and congregations who may choose to organize local gatherings. **Stay tuned for more information on a site in the Eastern North Dakota Synod.**

We hope that this event can be part of a movement across our region for moral deliberation and collective action that will reduce gun violence in our communities and contribute to communal healing and the common good. We hope you will join us.