



Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

We grieve with heavy hearts following the deadly attack at the Islamic Center of San Diego earlier this week. In a place devoted to prayer and community, three lives were taken in an act of violence that authorities are investigating as a hate crime.

We mourn with the families of those who lost their lives, with the Muslim community in San Diego and with all who carry fear and sorrow in the wake of this tragedy. We give thanks for those whose courageous actions helped protect others — bearing witness, even in crisis, to the God-given dignity of every human life.

As the ELCA, we must speak plainly: violence rooted in hatred is sin. We condemn Islamophobia and acknowledge its rise in recent years. Our church affirms that “anti-Muslim hatred is antithetical to our Christian faith” (A Declaration of the ELCA to the Muslim Community), for we are called to love our neighbor in ways that cast out fear (1 John 4:18).

This violence does not stand alone. It grows in a climate where fear, dehumanization and anti-Muslim rhetoric take hold. As people of faith, we are called to interrupt that pattern — to speak, to show up and to stand with those who are targeted.

We must also name the ongoing crisis of gun violence in our nation. Our church has long taught that society shares responsibility for protecting life and promoting the common good (*The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, 1991). We have urged stronger measures to prevent gun-related violence and death (“Gun-related Violence and Trauma,” 2024). This tragedy is yet another reminder that we cannot look away.

Our calling as the church requires more than naming what is wrong — we must move forward. Our church has committed itself to relationship, solidarity and shared life with our neighbors. We are called:

- To stand in visible solidarity with our Muslim neighbors.
- To build real relationships that deepen understanding and trust.
- To speak out whenever hatred or fear is given voice.
- To examine our own words and actions and to seek reconciliation where harm has been done.

Our Lutheran faith teaches us not only to refrain from harming our neighbor but also to defend them — to speak well of them and to stand with them when they are under threat. This is that moment.

To our Muslim neighbors: we affirm our love and respect for you. We stand with you — not only in grief but also in the ongoing work of building communities where all people can live and worship in safety.

I ask the people of this church to respond with courage:

- **Connect with neighbors** in solidarity and presence.
- **Speak out** against anti-Muslim hatred.
- **Build relationships** that reflect the love of Christ.
- **Advocate** by calling on public officials to publicly condemn the attack and to support a thorough investigation.

In this moment, we return to a truth we have proclaimed before: *Hate will not divide us.*

We are people of resurrection hope. Even now, God is calling us — beyond fear, beyond division — toward a future shaped by justice, compassion and peace.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he beckons us: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

Hate will not have the final word, and we will not grow weary in speaking out against it.

In Christ,



The Rev. Yehiel Curry  
Presiding Bishop  
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**Resources:**

- ELCA social statement [The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective](#)
- ELCA social messages “[Community Violence](#)” and “[Gun-related Violence and Trauma](#)”
- “[A Declaration of the ELCA to the Muslim Community](#)”