



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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ELCA Bishops Call for Statewide Protections during the Pandemic

As COVID-19 cases explode across Wisconsin, our government leaders continue to be at odds. Why have efforts to diminish the spread of the virus been so partisan? Nonpartisan science and public health experts are very clear that masks, distancing, and hand-washing help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations in Wisconsin have more than 400,000 baptized members. As our leaders work to make decisions on how to worship, connect, and serve in these challenging times, we are guided by scripture, our theology, and the best scientific knowledge we can gather. We stand united in promoting precautions recommended by DHS to our members and congregations, but it is becoming clear that mere recommendations are not enough. Without unified state mandates, decisions are left to local municipalities and community leaders, resulting in piecemeal policies that weaken our front against the pervasive Coronavirus and promote enmity between neighbors.

A Green Bay city council member shared with us that she received hate mail and even death threats when the council issued a local mask mandate before the state mandate was issued. Public health officers and congregational leaders have similar stories of conflict and harassment.

We ask that our elected officials in the Wisconsin State Legislature take leadership to protect the entire state of Wisconsin by creating policies on masks and indoor gatherings based upon recommendations issued by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. State mandates backed by DHS, the State Legislature, and the Governor's office would help to save lives and send the message that we are all indeed in this together.

Bishop James Arends
La Crosse Area Synod

Bishop Gerald Mansholt
East Central Synod of Wisconsin

Bishop Paul Erickson
Greater Milwaukee Synod

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

Bishop Katherine Finegan
Northern Great Lakes Synod

Bishop Joy Mortensen-Wiebe
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin