



**South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.

Prayers and Resources



"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." Jeremiah 31:15 (NRSV)

“Lord, have mercy.”

These are the first words I said when my phone flashed the terrible update about yet another shooting, this time at an elementary school. The grief and rage from the shooting in Buffalo are still fresh and here we are again, asking, “How long, O Lord?” and raising our voices in shock and lament.

Undoubtedly, all who preach this weekend will be navigating the complex and difficult course of what to say and how to say it. We will seek to offer a space to lament the torrent of violence that seems to plague our nation. We will undoubtedly offend those who disagree with whatever stance we take; we will undoubtedly disappoint even those who do agree, knowing that no words by themselves are sufficient.

And yet, my siblings in faith, **we must start somewhere.** Below are a few resources for you as you prepare to preach, lead worship, and engage in conversation.

Blessings on your ministry. Blessings on this faithful work you do in Jesus’ name.

In Christ,
Rev. Jen Christenson
Associate to the Bishop for Communication and Relationship

Let Your Church Bells Ring

Our partners in ministry at the Wisconsin Council of Churches have shared an invitation to faith communities to join in a nationwide practice of lament on Thursday, May 26.

At noon (local time), churches with outdoor bells are invited to ring them 19 times, one toll for each of the children whose lives were lost.

You might also consider inviting congregation members to pause at noon for a moment of prayer or lament.

Prayers of Intercession

Below are some prayer petitions you can use for worship, online, or your own personal prayers. Please feel free to adapt to fit your context as needed.

How long, O Lord, how long? Once more we fall before you, broken, angry, hurting, and weeping for yet more innocent lives lost. Wrap your loving arms around those who weep this day: those who weep for the children and teachers of Robb Elementary; those who weep for the shoppers in Buffalo; those whose wounds have been opened anew by yet another senseless act of violence. Lord, in your mercy... (Hear our prayer).

Lord, fill us with holy rage. Inspire us to turn our horror into action. Move our elected leaders to use their power to ensure that our grocery stores, synagogues, schools, churches, shopping centers, movie theaters, and homes are as free from gun violence as possible. Give us the words and the will to have the difficult conversations and to fight the good fight of peace and justice. Lord, in your mercy... (Hear our prayer).

God, give us the strength to add our grief to all of the other challenges we face in this time. Even as we mourn, the pandemic still claims and disrupts lives all around us. Our siblings of color are still crushed by racist institutions. The people of Ukraine are still fighting for their homeland. Our earth is still crying out in distress. The list could go on. Help us, Lord, in times where so much feels so heavy, to remember that we do not bear these burdens alone, that you are there with us, holding us, leading us, carrying us, inspiring us. Lord, in your mercy... (Hear our prayer).

All Creation Sings and Other ELCA Worship Materials

The newest worship resource from the ELCA, "All Creation Sings," also has a selection of prayers for lamenting gun violence. And yes, while I appreciate this greatly, I lament along with many colleagues that we would even need to include such a thing in our worship books.

If you have a Sundays and Seasons account, you can access the "All Creations Sings" hymnal and "Lamenting Gun Violence" resources there.

Click [here](#) for a Litany regarding gun violence from the ELCA.

Study Resources

Below are links to study resources about gun violence.

["A 60-day Journey Toward Justice"](#) (ELCA)

["Who is My Neighbor? Multigenerational Conversations on Faith & Gun](#)

Violence" (Wisconsin Council of Churches)

God bless you all as you engage in this holy and important work.

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