Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love

A Statement from the National Bishop on the recent Gun Violence

March 17, 2026

> Depart from evil, and do good;
> seek peace, and pursue it.
> Psalm 34:14

Dear Beloved of God:

I am grieved, appalled and concerned by several incidents of Synagogues being attacked in Canada and the United States including several involving gun violence.

Attacks on sacred spaces and social gathering places are a threat to individuals and a wound to the communities who desire to come together in the name of faith, friendship and mutual support. Threats, intimidation and violence directed toward the Jewish community stir up deep emotions by touching on the long and sinful history of antisemitism. These acts of terror and hate generate even more fear in a world that is desperately yearning for peace, respect, safety and dignity.

In 1995, the ELCIC stated that *Anti-semitism is an affront to the Gospel, a contradiction of its central teachings, and a violation of our hope and calling. We pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry in our own circles and in the society around us*.[1] Today, we are renewed in this commitment to oppose hatred in all its forms, to live out God's grace and unconditional love, to pray for our own transformation and to walk the paths of courage, healing, respect and truly equitable community.

In this moment when fear and division threaten the fabric of our communities, the church is called to be a witness to God's justice, mercy and peace. We do not stand against hatred simply because it is socially unacceptable; we stand against it because the Gospel compels us. Christ calls us to be people who resist violence, protect the vulnerable and proclaim the dignity of every human being.

Please join me in prayer:

> Faithful God, surround us with your everlasting arms.
> Hear our cries of despair,
> Heed our calls for justice,
> and do not let us lose hope. Amen.[2]

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,

+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, National Bishop (he/him)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

---

1 ELCIC Statement to Jewish Community, 1995.
2 All Creation Sings