



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

October 27, 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I write to you with a broken heart – for the lives lost, wounded, and shattered by horrific hatred and violence at Tree of Life Congregation this morning. We join our Jewish neighbors and enter into mourning for all that has been lost. In our grief, God is our comfort. “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

From Pittsburgh to Portland, and around the world, Jews are living in fear. Anti-Semitism is on the rise. Public acts of hatred and bigotry against Jews are commonplace. As Christians, and particularly as Lutherans, we deplore and reject this bigotry. “We recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us” (1994 Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community).

We are reminded that hate-filled violence knows no bounds – whether a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, a Christian church in Charleston, or a Jewish synagogue in Pittsburgh. As people of faith, we are bound together not only in our mourning, but also in our response.

Therefore, in this tender moment of grief, let us reach out to those whose hearts are most broken – our Jewish neighbors. I encourage you to contact your local synagogue, or your Jewish colleagues, friends, and family members, to share your words of care, support, love, and protection. There may be specific acts you might offer to demonstrate your care, such as when the members of Faith Lutheran Church surrounded Congregation Beth Israel of Chico, California, serving as *Shomrim*, or guardians, as they observed Yom Kippur following a hate crime in 2009.

Such simple acts can go a long way to demonstrate our love, as an extension of God’s love. As we seek to heal the brokenhearted, we are assured that God is near. There is no greater promise in the face of grief.

In peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop, ELCA