

SAFER TOGETHER

Beyond the Gun Control Debate

*A Peacemaking Initiative Among the People and Congregations of the ELCA
in Minnesota and North Dakota*

***“Christian love builds powerful relations of giving and receiving that counter the
isolation, despair, enmity, and nihilism that often contribute to lethal harm and criminal homicide.”
– ELCA Social Message on Gun-related Violence and Trauma***

The United States continues to face an epidemic of violence and harm involving guns. Communities across our region have not been spared. Most recently, Minnesota experienced the Annunciation school and church shooting and the political assassinations of Representative Hortman and her husband. Too often public debates around firearm use and misuse devolve into a standoff between personal rights and government control.

This pattern fails to address the many ways each of us can act to reduce gun-related violence and trauma in our homes, workplaces, schools, and communities. As Lutherans, how do we respond to this ongoing reality? What does our social teaching say? How might we foster the kind of moral deliberation and call to action that can lead to meaningful change?

To address these questions, ELCA synods and congregations of Minnesota and North Dakota are organizing opportunities for shared learning, discernment, and collective action toward solutions to the harms of gun misuse in our unique contexts. We hope to move beyond the gun rights-gun control debate and to promote safer communities with the conviction that we are safer together.

On the evening of 27 October 2026, the Safer Together launch will bring together rostered and lay people to engage in conversation with Dr. Jillian Pederson, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Hamline University and the Executive Director of The Violence Prevention Project. Dr. Pederson will present her ground-breaking research into sources and solutions to the mass shooting epidemic in the United States. Following her presentation, participants will be invited to discuss mass shooting and ELCA social teaching. In-person conversations across congregations in Minnesota and North Dakota will allow participants to consider how their own communities are impacted by gun misuse and harm.

This event will be available both in-person at synod-sponsored sites and livestreamed for interested individuals and congregations who choose to organize local gatherings. We hope that this event can launch a movement across our region for moral deliberation and collective action that will reduce gun violence and trauma in our communities and contribute to communal healing and the common good. We hope you will join us.

Bp. Justin Grimm, St. Paul Area

Bp. Regina Hassanally Southeastern Minnesota

Bp. Tessa Moon Leiseth, Eastern North Dakota

Bp. Lisa Lewton, Western North Dakota

Bp. Jen Nagel, Minneapolis Area

Bp. Dee Peterson, Southwestern Minnesota

Bp. Taryn Montgomery, Northeastern Minnesota

Bp. William Tesch, Northwestern Minnesota