

An Open Letter to Muslim Friends in Canada and Muslim Neighbours in New Zealand

March 19, 2019

Grace and peace to you.

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you, says the Lord. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands. —Isaiah 49:15-16

Early Friday morning, we received with shock the news of the attacks that occurred at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. I am heartbroken and filled with horror at the massacre of innocent people gathered for prayer in the Al-Noor Masjid and Linwood Islamic Centre.

In those early hours, I called on the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to join me in the following prayer:

God of consolation, we mourn the two mass shootings at mosques in Christchurch. We pray for the victims, the injured, their families, and all who are now afraid of further violence. Strengthen us to stand with our Muslim neighbours against all forms of Islamophobia and to work to end gun violence. Amen.

In 2015, our ELCIC National Convention endorsed the document *Welcoming the Stranger*. In this action, we affirmed that our “faith teaches that compassion, mercy, love and hospitality are for everyone: the native born and the foreign born, the member of my community and the newcomer.” We joined with people of all faiths on a journey toward peace, respect and true community.

In January 2017, I called for prayers and solidarity following the attack that occurred during Sunday night prayers at a Quebec City mosque. I urged the members of our church to “reach out in a genuine expression of love for our neighbour as we stand in solidarity... and speak out against all forms of racism and violence against Muslims.”

At our upcoming National Convention this July, we will continue to work towards further relationship and the support of Christian-Muslim engagement in communities across Canada.

I am inviting every community in our Church to embrace our Muslim sisters and brothers; to stand with our Muslim neighbours against all forms of Islamophobia; and to consider how we might reach out to one another in our communities, in gestures of support and human solidarity.

In times of shock, horror, and difficulty, people of faith look to the God of mercy for comfort, strength and hope. It is God’s steadfast presence and love that leads toward healing and restoration of spirit that helps us to choose the ways of peace.

The nurturing of interfaith relationships and respect for persons of other faith communities is of the utmost importance as we seek to worship and follow the God who always remembers and cherishes each of God’s children.

Yours in Christ,



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National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada