



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

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## Statement from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton on executive order

*6/22/2018 10:10:00 AM*

About two weeks ago, I joined more than 20 other faith leaders in raising concerns about the administration's announced plans that it would begin separating families and criminally prosecuting all people who enter the U.S. without previous authorization. In line with that statement, I acknowledge that President Donald Trump's new executive order, "Affording Congress an Opportunity to Address Family Separation," does keep families together, but for how long and in what conditions? I am troubled by what the executive order does and does not guarantee. There is no provision for reuniting children already separated from their families, nor for children whose parents have already been deported. The executive order also allows for the possibility of future family separations.

The forced separation of children from their parents is unnecessarily cruel, further traumatizing families who have already suffered in their countries of origin and on the dangerous journey to the U.S. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its predecessor church bodies have a long history of caring for children, families and refugees. It's who we are.

This executive order will expand the detention of families. The ELCA opposed the detention of families policy during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations, and we oppose the policy now. Detention centers are not designed to support families. Community-based alternatives to detention, like ones that Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has piloted, are cost-effective ways to ensure that children and parents can await their court case in a dignified setting.

In his explanation of the Lord's Prayer in the Small Catechism, Martin Luther reminds us that good government is part of our daily bread. As Lutherans and as citizens, we can work with elected officials toward humane, just, and compassionate solutions. Through AMMPARO and LIRS, the ELCA is committed to walking alongside children and families who are seeking asylum. You can be part of a network that uses their hands and voice to ensure they feel welcomed wherever they go. We can also advocate through ELCA Advocacy ([elca.org/advocacy](http://elca.org/advocacy)).

By grace we are set free to love and serve the neighbor. Let us, through prayer and action, serve these vulnerable children and families.