

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Below, is a letter that was forwarded to me and other clergy in the La Crosse Area Synod on Monday, August 31. Along with the letter, was a note saying that we are free to share its contents with our ministry communities. The letter is from Rev. Matthew Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. It provides an update on what is happening in Kenosha, including the ELCA efforts in that area.

I am forwarding this to you, because it relates to the recent unrest and my sermon of last Sunday. There is a prayer at the end of Rev. Short's letter. Let us pray for peace together with our brothers and sisters in Christ from the Greater Milwaukee Synod, the La Crosse Area Synod, and other synods.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy

For those wishing to respond in some way to the crisis in Kenosha

I have gotten a question from a couple of you about how to direct anyone who wants to respond in a helpful way to the situation in Kenosha.

First, if you would like to read our Bishop's recent "pastoral letter," click here.

<https://milwaukee-synod.org/blog/2020/08/25/a-pastoral-letter-on-these-troubling-times/>

Here are our thoughts about what it would look like to support Kenosha right now:

a. In the immediate moment, the request is...stay home, pray, engage online, and stay attentive to individual anti-racism work.

Kenosha has enough folks coming in from the outside right now. The immediate request is for fervent prayers for justice, for peace, for all community leaders, and for our leaders and members of color for whom this is another traumatic reminder of daily realities. People can also engage online, offering statements of support for Kenosha, and for the ELCA ministries on the front lines of the response (see "b" below).

The other request is that all of us be about doing our own work; taking the next step in our anti-racism journeys. Akin to the way a congregation is only as spiritually vital as its members, so a church body or a society will only be as anti-racist as its individual members. Large systemic change like what is needed is only possible when we are each attending to our own work of un-learning the lies privilege and supremacy have told us for a long time.

b. Even though the situation is still evolving and we are not yet clear what the needs will be, we know that there will be a need for financial support for the ongoing work and recovery in

Kenosha. If any want to make financial contributions to aid in the recovery and rebuilding work, we are accepting funds to support our congregations and ministries there as they participate in the response and recovery work. Two options for any support would be:

Giving online: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/1159385 (if using this link, make sure to choose “Kenosha Response Fund” from the drop-down menu)

Giving by check: Checks can also be mailed to the Greater Milwaukee Synod, PO Box 341695, Milwaukee, WI 53234, and should include “Kenosha response” in the memo line.

Through Outreach For Hope (<https://outreachforhope.org>), we are partnered with many of the front-line ministries in Kenosha.

Specifically, the two Outreach For Hope ministries on the front lines of the relief effort will be:

- The ELCA Outreach Center - <https://elcaoutreachcenter.org>

- Grace Welcome Center - <https://gracewelcomecenter.org>

c. Consider telling the story of, and supporting, the Black String Triage Ensemble.

<https://www.theblackstringtriageensemble.org/themission>

This group of black and latinx musicians is like an on-call orchestra, showing up at scenes of trauma and using music to help the communities heal. They were present in Kenosha this week, playing songs like Lift Every Voice and Let Us Break Bread Together on our Knees as fires burned around them.

The Greater Milwaukee Synod is the fiscal agent for the Black String Triage Ensemble, and is proud to partner with and support the vision of founder Dayvin Hallmon. Read more in this interview from just a few days ago:

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/columns/heidi-stevens/ct-heidi-stevens-black-string-triage-ensemble-kenosha-0826-20200826-cmoubxxiprdtbax5wyiyf2qtjq-story.html?fbclid=IwAR1dblGu9NQj05PUqGoiS6gdNLgMCHDj3vbq4MofDDONs3AqAJKfuiU1ny8>

Thank you all for your partnership and prayers.

Below is a prayer we are inviting all of our congregations to include in their weekend services:

Creator God, our hearts are filled with sadness, anger, concern, and fear as we consider all that is happening in Kenosha. We lift before you all whose lives have been impacted, especially Jacob Blake and his family, those injured and killed in the protests, business owners whose livelihood has been destroyed, protestors crying out for justice and reform, police officers struggling to serve and protect, elected officials working to address longstanding injustice and discrimination, residents who are fearful and grief-stricken, and the congregations, pastors, and leaders who are

trying to hold a space for lament, confession, renewal, and transformation. Grant us peace, grant us courage, grant us hope, that we might find our way through this current time and find ourselves more closely connected to you and to one another as we inch our way toward the beloved community you desire for us all. Through Christ, our Lord; amen.

Peace,

Rev. Matthew Short | he, him, his
Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission
Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA