



From: Rev. Sara Lilja, Director LEAMNJ

In the face of violence in our state, God's resolve for peace in human communities is unshakable. Deliberate acts to harm or kill innocent people violate God's intention for human community. The Episcopal Church and the Lutheran Church (ELCA) call upon the legislature to support efforts that reduce violence and keep our communities safe.

The bill (**S2360**) to be voted on today is one such attempt. It would require local, county and state law enforcement officers to be alerted when people with a history of serious mental illness ask a judge to expunge their record of psychiatric treatment so they may buy a firearm.

Responding to a request by the judiciary, this bill would provide judges with relevant information regarding a person's history when they are making important decisions on the expungement of records. This legislation could impact public safety and the safety of the petitioner.

We are committed to do all that we can to prevent violence in our communities and we ask our legislature to do the same. This is a common sense prevention bill. Often when we learn of God's people being harmed by violence in the home or on the street, it appears so unexpected or random. On those occasions where we have knowledge of the possibility of violence, and have the means to prevent it, we must act! Not acting, when we have the possibility to prevent violence is egregious. We have a moral obligation to do all that is possible on behalf of those who may be harmed to pass legislation that will keep God's children safe. We urge the Senators to vote in favor of this legislation.

May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!
Psalm 29:11

The Right Rev. William Stokes, Bishop of New Jersey
The Right Rev. Mark Beckwith, Bishop of Newark
Rev. Tracie Bartholomew, Bishop NJ Synod ELCA