



# Southwestern Washington Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

The Rev. Richard E. Jaech, Bishop

11 May 2018

Dear Southwestern Washington Synod leaders,

On May 6, six days before Mother's Day, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered Border Agents to forcibly separate children from their mothers if they are caught seeking refuge in the United States without proper documents. The children, who are fleeing murder and violence in their home countries, are to be taken to one detention facility where they may stay for months, while their mothers and fathers are taken to another.



I was revolted when I heard this news. The last time I saw such a thing happen was when I viewed WWII film clips of Nazi German soldiers forcibly pulling children from their parents as they were taken to the camps. I do not make that comparison lightly or without taking seriously what I am implying. While Hitler's actions were even more unspeakably horrible because he was sending Jewish families to death camps, it is fundamentally horrible and inhumane to separate young children from their parents in any circumstance. It furthermore endangers the very soul of our nation to act in such a cruel fashion.

I recognize that there are major challenges and problems we must address regarding the movement of refugees and immigrants coming to our country. We need borders that are safe and regulated, while at the same time we need to assist neighboring countries to become more stable so that families are not forced to flee for their lives.

420 121st St S Tacoma, WA 98444 • 253-535-8300 • [swwsynod@plu.edu](mailto:swwsynod@plu.edu) • [www.lutheranssw.org](http://www.lutheranssw.org)

*The mission of the Southwestern Washington Synod is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ by empowering congregations and Church leaders to grow in worship, education, outreach, stewardship and other ministries.*

However, no matter what the crisis, it is absolutely against the way of Jesus to separate five-year-old children from their mothers for months at a time as a tactic to stop refugee migration.

In WWII Germany, Lutherans were largely silent when the Nazis acted so inhumanely. We Lutherans cannot be silent again when children are being abused. I urge you to exercise your rights and responsibilities as citizens and contact your US representatives and senators, asking them to oppose the separation of children from parents. If you would like more background on the children that are seeking refuge, I recommend that you go to our national ELCA web page that tells about the AMMPARO program, which ministers to migrant children. <https://www.elca.org/ammparo>

Finally, I welcome your response to these words, including if you disagree with me. I know that there are many deeply felt opinions on the immigration issue and I respect that. However, I also feel it is better to talk openly and honestly than remain silent when children's lives and the deepest values of our nation are at stake. May God continue to bring us wisdom and courage.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard E. Jaech". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bishop Rick Jaech