*Draft letter sent December 15, 2016, to the following elected federal leaders representing the area of the Minneapolis Area Synod:*

*Honorable Senator Amy Klobuchar*

*Honorable Senator Al Franken*

*Honorable Representative Erik Paulsen*

*Honorable Representative Keith Ellison*

*Honorable Representative Tom Emmer*

*Honorable Representative Rick Nolan*

*Honorable Representative-elect Jason Lewis*

As the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with 147 congregations and more than 180,000 members, I have been called on by our annual assembly to communicate synod’s concerns that Congress:

* Follow the U.S. Constitution’s insistence that only the Congress can declare war,
* Rescind the Authorization of Use of Military Force (AUMF), passed by the Congress in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, so that it is not applied indefinitely and indiscriminately to all countries and targets, and
* Call for hearings and a report evaluating the consequences of U.S. military action since 1990 on global violence and instability by the Foreign Relations and Affairs Committee or the Armed Services Committee.

In the ELCA’s social statement *For Peace in God’s World*, it states, “Wars, both between and within states, represent a horrendous failure of politics. The evil of war is especially evident in the number of children and other noncombatants who suffer and die.”

The 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly issued a call for congregations to a “time of prayer and communal discernment over the next three years to promote robust examination of the expanded U.S. war efforts since 1990.”  I am calling on congregations and people of the synod to a time of communal soul-searching on the moral impact and societal consequences of expanded U.S. war efforts, and reflection on what reacting to violence with more violence has achieved. I invite Congress to join us in this process through the call for hearings on the impact on global violence and instability.

I am reminded that countless leaders note that public funds spent on war have the effect of diverting worthy support from domestic needs. In addition, many of our veterans have remarked about the great waste that they have witnessed in military efforts and the suffering that continues after hostilities have ceased. Lutherans are cognizant that we were often refugees and so our hearts are moved by the current and growing refugee crisis.

I call on you, as an elected official, to do everything in your power to follow the Constitution, remove the AUMF, and evaluate the impact of expanded war efforts on the expansion of violence.

At this time in the church calendar, we are reminded that each Lutheran at baptism promises to be a peacemaker in our world, following the God of Peace. It is our deepest prayer that peace can be realized.

In peace,

Rev. Ann Svennungsen, Bishop