



# MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL of CHURCHES

Friday August 2, 2024

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*Statement from the Massachusetts Council of Churches Executive Board*

Over the weekend of July 27-28, 2024, five different Christian churches in four Massachusetts municipalities were violated in what appears to be a coordinated attack by other Christians on LGBT-affirming churches at:

- Christ Lutheran Church, Natick
- First Congregational Church, Natick
- First Congregational Church, Norwood
- First Congregational Church, Sharon
- St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Framingham

We renounce this violence as we serve the Prince of Peace. All houses of worship should be sanctuaries where people can worship safely, without intimidation or fear.

As Americans, we hold dearly the value of freedom to worship.

As Christians, we hold dearly the value of seeing each and every person as made in the image and likeness of God.

As the Executive Board of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, we are particularly heartbroken that Christians would physically attack one another. Our Savior Jesus Christ calls us to be one. Religious violence is never a solution to theological difference.

We raise our concern about increasing violence in a season where vicious rhetoric has been amplified. In recent years, we have seen attacks on majority Black churches, immigrant churches, and LGBT-affirming churches; we've seen statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary desecrated and Armenian Orthodox churches covered in anti-Artsakh graffiti. We've seen synagogues subject to antisemitic graffiti and mosques targeted Islamophobic slurs. In every case, we denounce such atrocious violence on every house of worship.

We trust local and federal authorities to investigate those who have desecrated these houses of worship, and, if they constitute hate crimes, to prosecute them accordingly.

In the coming days, we will offer additional programming to local congregations to increase their safety and security. We invite all churches to attend.

The eighteen member denominations of the Massachusetts Council of Churches have many theological differences, yet one Lord Jesus Christ.

*We pray our uncommon unity may be a source of strength to those who grieve and work for justice.*