

Terror not sole issue, bishop tells nominees: ELCA's Hanson urges attention to environment, health care and poverty

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Although terrorism looms large for White House candidates, the presiding bishop of the nation's largest Lutheran denomination has urged President George W. Bush and Democratic challenger Senator John F. Kerry also to address other concerns such as HIV/AIDS, the environment, affordable housing and health care, and the growing gap between the wealthy and the impoverished.

Only days before the first of three presidential debates, Bishop Mark S. Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America wrote letters to both men, pleading that they not "reduce all of the cries of suffering humanity to this single issue." The nationally televised debates were set for September 30, October 8 and October 13.

Sounding a theme voiced also this year by mainline Protestants, Hanson reminded nominees that while terrorism "haunts our times," there are other important matters such as "hunger and poverty, corrupt and brutal political systems, harsh discrimination and social inequalities, civil wars, environmental degradation and epidemic diseases."

Additionally, this is neither the time for the U.S. to withdraw from the world nor seek to "dominate the world with our economic and military power," Hanson said.