

# KEEPING THE PEACE

A Social Document of the  
ULCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

## A Series of Statements of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1922, 1924, 1930, 1936, 1952

**1922: Minutes, 3rd Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 419-20, 422.**

The Convention declared its conclusion:

1. That nations, no less than individuals, are bound by the moral law, and are responsible to God the Judge of all the earth, and that he will most surely punish and ultimately destroy them if they do not deal justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly before Him.
2. That the only true and certain way of peace and prosperity for nations as well as for individuals, is the way of repentance, and confession, and amendment of their ways, when they have sinned against God or towards each other.
3. That the Christian law of love and justice demands that the autonomy and rights of the weaker nations should be recognized by the strong nations, that the rights of minorities, whether racial, political or religious should be respected and protected, and that freedom of religious faith and worship should be everywhere guaranteed.
4. That the great Christian nations of the earth should use all the moral and political influence and economic pressure which they can command to stop the oppression, and persecution, and cruel treatment of Christians in the Orient, especially the Armenians.
5. That the maintenance of great standing armies, and great navies, whether of the sea or of the air, not only imposes heavy and oppressive burdens on the people, and involves an appalling waste of the economic resources and the man power of the nations, but also constitutes a constant menace to the peace of the world.
6. That the steps toward disarmament taken at the Conference in Washington, in which we greatly rejoice, should be followed up speedily by further efforts to induce all the nations to reduce their armaments by mutual agreements to a purely peace basis such as would be required only for the preservation of good order and the security of life and property within their own borders.

7. That our own nation, because of its strength and its great wealth and abounding prosperity, and because of its commanding place and influence among the nations of the earth, has special moral and international duties and responsibilities, and should take the lead, or most fully support and co-operate in all movements looking to the observance of international law, the securing of international justice and good will, the preservation of international peace, and the settlement of all disputes between nations by referring them to international courts of justice or boards of arbitration instead of by an appeal to arms.
8. That all Christians everywhere should use all their personal influence and rights as Citizens to secure the election or appointment to offices of a national character, of just and righteous men who will administer the affairs of government in such manner as will best serve the interests not only of their own people, but also of all people of whatever nation or race, and should pray unceasingly for the universal prevalence of peace and good will, that so the Church of Jesus Christ may fulfill its God-given task, the Kingdom of God may come, and His will be done.

**1924: Minutes, 4th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 274-76.**

We believe that the time has come when it is necessary to stress the fact that nationalism and internationalism are not mutually exclusive terms, that patriotism and love of other nations and races are complementary, that the processes employed by and within the nation to secure justice, peace and stability must be employed in an ever-increasing measure in the intercourse between nations, that the arbitrament of arms must yield in an ever larger degree to the arbitrament of reason, of law and of Christian love, and that to this end Christian citizens are pledged as such to exert every effort, through the establishment of some effective agency, to further justice and good will in their own country and in the commonwealth of nations. We believe that the Lutheran World Convention can contribute materially to the furtherance of world peace and petition it to consider this problem.

Holding these fundamental principles we recognize the fact that sin is still in the world and that nations might be unwarrantably incited to attack and invade our nation and therefore we believe that in accordance with the teaching of Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession and Article I of the Constitution of the United States, Christians may engage in just war and act as soldiers.

**1930: Minutes, 7th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 115-16.**

1. The United Lutheran Church in America in Convention assembled at Milwaukee, Wisc., hereby declares its profound gratitude to Almighty God for every advance which is being made toward the realization of a permanent peace among the nations of the earth.

2. We believe that the material losses of war, the fears engendered, the consequent hatreds and immeasurable suffering and sorrow resultant from international conflicts make war a devastating calamity for both victor and vanquished.
3. We further believe that through the growth of public confidence in the agencies and instruments for international peace the way can be opened, under the providence of God, for the substitution of the peaceful processes of adjudication and arbitration in place of armed conflict in the settlement of international disputes.
4. We therefore resolve to call upon the whole Christian Church to further the realization of this great hope by bringing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to bear upon the hearts of men, that they may learn to love peace and pursue it in a spirit of patient forgiveness and willing self-sacrifice after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. We further resolve to call upon all men as citizens of their respective lands to regard it as a solemn obligation of their citizenship to support in every way the forces which are working for a permanent peace among the nations of the world.

**1936: Minutes, 10th Biennial Convention. ULCA, pp. 373-74, 377-78.**

We reaffirm our devotion to the cause of peace, and urge upon our people their full cooperation in the adoption of measures designed to create the will to peace; and to this end we recommend to our people the thoughtful and prayerful consideration of the following possible methods of avoiding war, and request the educational agencies of our Church to provide material on these and kindred themes in their treatment of the cause of peace,

1. mandatory neutrality legislation
2. removal of munitions manufacture from private industry
3. limitation of military expenditure
4. popular referendum before our country can enter war, except in case of invasion.

We deprecate the growing militaristic spirit of many nations and call upon our constituency, to be often in penitent prayer to the Prince of Peace to have mercy upon the world' erring peoples and to lead them in paths of peace and world brotherhood.

**1952: Adopted by Board of Social Missions. Reported in Minutes, 18th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 785-86.**

The Board of Social Missions, meeting in a time of confusion and debate over issues of

foreign policy vital to world peace, calls upon members of The United Lutheran Church in America to give renewed attention to their responsibilities as Christian citizens in this crisis.

1. We call attention to the constitutional traditional principle, held by the United States and Canada, that military authority must be subordinate and obedient to the civilian power of government, and we urge our people to reaffirm our support of that principle.
2. We reaffirm the policy that our governments "must lead the way in reversing the mad trend toward a third world war." We reject the concept of a preventive war.
3. We urge our people in the United States to write immediately to their senators and congressmen urging affirmative and speedy action on the request from India for food grains to avert famine and mass starvation. We believe that this action will contribute to world stability and peace.
4. We urge our people in the United States and Canada to study carefully and support action on the program of technical assistance to underdeveloped countries in order that the living standards of poverty-stricken people may be raised. This is also important to the peace and political stability of the world.
5. We believe that the following five proposals of Dr. O Frederick Nolde, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, should be brought to the attention of our people and the governments of the United States and Canada:
  - a) The United States and the other Atlantic Pact nations should submit a general report to the United Nations on their abnormal military preparations and the reasons why these preparations appear to them unavoidable.
  - b) The United States and the nations associated with us should invite impartial international scrutiny of our armed forces on foreign soil by calling for the use of United Nations Peace Observer Commissions.
  - c) The United States and other nations must continue to recognize the authority of the United Nations to determine what measures shall be taken to oppose aggression.
  - d) The United States, while considering rearmament unavoidable, must demonstrate constant readiness to settle international disputes by negotiations and reconciliation.
  - e) The United States must work to bring all armaments under international regulation and control."