

# THE WITNESS OF U.S. LUTHERANS ON PEACE, WAR AND CONSCIENCE

A Social Document from the  
Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.



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

## A Study Paper of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.

The following document was adopted as a preliminary statement by the standing committee of the Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the USA, in March 1973 and commended as a useful instrument for study of the important issues of peace, war and conscience. The Executive Committee of the council subsequently recommended that the three participating church bodies engage in a broad, multi-level study of the document. The Coordinating Committee for Cooperative Parish Education Projects has produced a study guide based on this document. The guide will be available for use early in 1975 through the American Lutheran Church's Division for Life and Mission in the Congregation, the Lutheran Church in America's Division for Parish Services and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Division of Parish Services.

### Origin of Study

In early 1972, at the request of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran Council in the USA, the council's Division of Theological Studies launched a study on "Peace, War, and Conscience in the Lutheran Tradition." In a series of consultations, from May 1972 to March 1973, some 50 persons participated in identifying the problem areas and seeking consensus for this statement.

### Context of Study

The study was born out of the agony of United States involvement in Indochinese war. There was primary concern for the dilemma facing military-age young persons in our churches, a dilemma which may be summarized by stating three biblical themes learned by most young Christians:

- God asks us to do no harm to our neighbor;
- God asks us to give particular help to oppressed peoples;
- God asks us to respect the institution of government, to obey the law.

Perhaps no event has so spotlighted for Americans the difficulty of balancing those three imperatives as has the Vietnam War. The study therefore was shaped by two questions: What help does Lutheran theology offer on the problem of peace and war? What light does the Vietnam experience of the United States shed on the question?

### The Study's Audience

We wish to address our member churches as a whole — their leadership and their local congregations, the teachers of social ethics and the preachers of God's full

counsel. An immediate concern of the study is the military-age person, whether short-term or career professional. Since the language of this document is mainly theological-ethical, we believe those who counsel with persons making military-participation decisions will find it particularly useful. The concluding section addresses recommendations to individuals and specific instrumentalities of our churches.

### **Related Statements**

This study was able to build on a groundwork already laid by studies, statements, and policy papers adopted by individual participating churches on issues of peace, war, and conscience, especially during the past decade. We summarize their content briefly here (for a list, see Appendix A):

U.S. Lutherans of the three churches participating in the Lutheran Council have expressed as their official policy the position of support for selective conscientious objection — the individual's right to refuse participation in a particular war when such participation, to him, would clearly be wrong. The churches have asked the government to change the law so that selective objection is legal; they have also committed themselves to pastoral support of those who find themselves in conflict with law for reasons of conscience.

Two of the three churches have encouraged study of amnesty for war objectors. The 1972 annual meeting of the Lutheran Council asked for resolution of the amnesty question in a way that would "facilitate reentry" into American society by those in exile, in prison, or underground.

<sup>1</sup> Statements on the Vietnam War itself reflected the general U.S. concern about the war's length, its purposes, and its divisiveness at home.

Beyond these rather broad concerns, it is not possible to say with any precision what Lutherans in the United States believe about peace and war generally or about any particular war or peace policy. (The one finding from a recent national survey is offered by *A Study of Generations*,<sup>2</sup> which includes a single item on war and peace. In response to the statement, "All war is basically wrong," 52 per cent of Lutherans surveyed said Yes, 39 per cent said No, and 9 per cent were uncertain or gave no response.)

This document does not claim to reflect a cross-section opinion among U.S. Lutherans. It should be seen rather as a gathering of the peace/war concerns of a group asked to study and make recommendations, including theologians, social ethicists, military chaplains, conscientious objectors, pastors, and international law specialists. It is a document which speaks to the churches and speaks only tentatively. It is designed for study and response in the churches. It hopes to engage a broad spectrum of U.S. Lutherans in consideration of the issues. That goal is far more important than any desire that its assertions find uniform approval.

## **Section I: Central Questions**

We begin with the observation that the phenomenon of war is viewed from various biblical perspectives, among which are:

- War seen as against God's desire for peace and order (Isaiah 2.4, Psalm 46.9);
- War seen as an evidence of Satanic powers at work (Revelation);
- War seen as an evidence of the sinful arrogance of men (James 4.1);
- War seen as a judgment of God against men (Psalm 68.30, 2 Chronicles 16.9);
- War seen as a means for accomplishing God's will (Deuteronomy 9, 1 Chronicles 5.22).

Having discovered this, where does the individual go for help in deciding about the meaning of the particular war in which he or she is asked to take part? Granted that war may be a justifiable exception to the biblical requirement that I seek the well-being of my neighbor, to which neighbor must try to do good in a particular circumstance involving the use of coercive force?

Our study has identified four central questions which Lutherans in the United States must continue to examine if the individual struggling with a war participation decision is to be helped and the corporate witness for peace of U.S. Lutherans is to grow in effectiveness. The four questions are: What is the peace/war ethic of U.S. Lutherans? What is the Lutheran view of the individual's responsibility to governing authorities? What is the church's role in developing individual conscience on peace/war? What are the resources available for making world peace and justice a priority among U.S. Lutherans?

### **Our Peace/War Ethic**

1. Lutherans customarily see politics as the process of building and maintaining human community. It is the way in which differences among persons and groups, and in global politics among nations, are accommodated in the interest of the common good. Participation in politics is considered to be part of the vocation to neighbor-love. However, the ultimate loyalty of the Christian is to God-in-Christ, whose perfect justice judges every political arrangement. The choices which Christians make about war and military participation will be expressions of an ethic that acts within political processes and institutions, while taking its bearings from beyond them.

2. The Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century do not deal at length with the question of peace and war. In some instances the confessions see war as inspired by Satan, at other times as a means of public redress commanded by God. The confessions see Christians as morally able, under certain circumstances, to participate in war or in military service. What are those circumstances?

3. It is apparent that the Lutheran reformers wrote about military participation within the context of the just-war criteria generally accepted in Christian ethical thought of that time. Luther's own assumptions appear in his stipulations that a war be entered only as a last resort, be defensive, and be fought under rules of conduct. Similarly,

U.S. Lutheran statements of the past decade on war and conscience appeal to the theory of the just war. It is worth recalling here that the just-war ethic also provides the foundation for the treaties and conventions of international law concerning war.

4. Broadly speaking, there have been only two other ethical options available: pacifism (war always wrong, always a greater evil than not going to war) and the holy war position (war waged in the name of God or of a "true faith" — religious or secular). Neither of these positions can be termed "Lutheran," although individual Lutherans have held them.

5. It is clear to us that the idea of the just war (some would prefer "justifiable war") is part of the ethical legacy of Lutherans. A summary of its chief points would include the following: Considerations *ad bellum* (when contemplating warfare):

- a. Does it have a just cause, e.g., to protect the innocent or to restore basic rights wrongfully denied?
- b. Is it truly a last resort, methods short of violence having been exhausted?
- c. Will it be entered through the nation's properly constituted procedure for declaring and waging war?
- d. Does it have reasonable prospect of success — that is, can the goals of the warfare likely be attained without squandering the lives and goods of the people?

Considerations *in bello* (during the conduct of warfare):

- e. Does the conduct show due proportion between means used and ends sought, avoiding wanton and unnecessary destruction?
- f. Does the conduct safeguard noncombatants, using force only to restrain and doing no harm to those who can inflict no harm (civilians, prisoners)?
- g. Does the government promise mercy to a defeated enemy, including assistance with rebuilding what has been destroyed?

6. We recognize that war today is not the same reality as that known by the developers of the criteria for justifiable war. That is, *total* war using all the weaponry now available is excluded by the tests of the criteria themselves, and *limited* war (e.g., guerilla war) today is typically fought *without* the clear distinctions between combatants and noncombatants which the theory assumes. Further, the context for much use of organized force today is not traditional warfare between nations but warfare *within* nations — civil war or revolution. It may now be just as necessary to speak about an ethic for the "just revolution" or for any proposed use of violence.

7. In this relatively new political and military context, is the traditional just-war theory ethically viable? It is true that governments and peoples have continued to go to war on the basis of self-interest and have never been notably restrained from such action by ethical theories. We believe, however, that the concept of the just war still serves a useful function by keeping before the eyes of participants demands such as proper conduct, justifiable cause, proportion between means and ends, and mercy to the vanquished. The main weakness of the just-war criteria has always been not their failure but the failure of leaders and citizens alike to rely on them early enough.

We believe, therefore, that the just-war teaching, taught widely and employed in time, has continuing value as a guide to ethical reasoning about participation in war — at three levels:

a. *By each individual* in arriving at his or her own judgment about a given military action or nation policy;

b. *By a community of Christians* seeking a corporate stance;

c. *By those who make policy* and conduct hostilities for the state.

8. At the same time, we believe that anyone using the traditional theory today must actively seek to apply more rigorous criteria than ever before, criteria which will be more critical of military solutions to international conflict and more suspicious of militarism as an ideology. Toward the development of such more restrictive criteria, we suggest that attention be given especially to these needs:

a. The need for clarification of war-making powers under the U.S. Constitution;

b. The need for more thorough instruction of all U.S. military personnel in the laws of war to which this nation has committed itself (e.g., international conventions, the Nuremburg principles);

c. The need for development of a "just-peace" ethic — that is, our goal is not only to avoid harming our nation-neighbor but to seek his well-being in all respects; we commit ourselves to wage peace.

9. We finally urge Lutherans, wherever possible, to seek theological conversations with representatives of the historic peace churches, exploring especially the respective traditions on peace/war and the individual's relationship to the state.

### **Our View of Individual Responsibility to Governing Authorities**

1. Lutherans have usually seen government as given by God for the good of the people and have taught that responsible Christian living requires involvement in government. "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right" (1 Peter 2.13-14). We have also recognized that government is capable of error and that particular government policies may never be totally identified with the will of God for civil affairs. Yet in the United States, on matters of war and peace, Lutherans have seldom questioned the requirements of the national government. Ironically, distaste for obligatory military service was one motivation behind the migration of thousands of Lutherans from Europe to this country during the past century — because the U.S. had a tradition of no peacetime draft until World War II. There has been no comparable Lutheran rejection of peacetime conscription or of national war policies in this land. And dissent expressed in acts of civil disobedience has hardly been known among us.

2. In looking for biblical guidance, Lutherans have relied heavily on the counsel of

Romans 13.1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." A central danger for Lutherans is that, using only a narrow reading of Romans 13.1 as our guide, we will identify government policies with God's will. The Christian should see that Romans 13 is to be interpreted in the light of Romans 12.1-2, "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12 also speaks of feeding one's enemy and leaving vengeance to the wrath of God.

3. Furthermore, Romans 13 does not address the problem that exists when authority supports the evil and punishes the good. What does the Christian do then? Luther quoted Acts 5.29, "We must obey God rather than men," as pertinent advice for the soldier who believed his government to be wrong about a war, but Lutherans have often failed to give that advice. Finally, Revelation 13 with its warning against state worship is a needed counterpoint to nationalistic interpretations of Romans 13.

4. We offer five specific reminders on the question of obedience to governing authorities in relation to war:

a. The 20th-century American socio-political situation lays a responsibility upon citizens for the actions of their government in a way which did not characterize the socio-political situation in either the New Testament era or the lands where Luther worked in the Reformation. Thus the government can no longer be understood as "they" by the American citizen. Its sins of commission may be our sins of omission.

b. Respect for the institution of government as ordained of God does not require acceptance of every specific policy of government. There are times when one's sense of God's will for his life may lead, as with Luther, to disobedience of government demands. Lutherans recognize that the right of selective objection to military participation flows from such an understanding. It is a rejection of a specific governmental demand, not a rejection of government or law as such.

c. "Governing authorities," as used in Romans 13.1, is not limited to national government. Structures of international order which have been given governmental power (e.g., the conventions governing warfare, international courts, the United Nations) should be seen as having legitimate authority. The nation-state as we know it is a phenomenon of the last few centuries in the West and is likely not the final stage in the development of political institutions. International structures are doing the will of God when they fit the description of governing authorities found in Romans 13. 2-7.

d. The moral issue of participation in war we confront both as Christians who are citizens of a particular nation and as citizens who are Christians and give primary allegiance to the God and Redeemer of all humankind. Christians therefore do have a basic identity and loyalty which moves beyond strictly national concerns to all

fellow believers and to the whole of mankind.

e. The Christian confession that God is "maker ... of all things visible and invisible" requires respect for all fellow created beings. Before nations enter war or individuals enter combat, the enemy is usually depicted as a demon, so that he will be viewed as less than human. This phenomenon of hysteria about the enemy should be countered by the reminder that life is a precious possession of every one of God's human creatures.

### **The Church's Role in Conscience Development**

1. For Christians, ethical decision-making is not merely a solitary or autonomous activity. Guidance for making ethical choices is to be sought from the Scriptures within the believing community. "The church has long considered itself to be the guardian and guide of Christian conscience... [but] the church will have to make a much greater effort at being that kind of fellowship in which the morally sensitive person can in fact receive support and guidance.... [3](#)

2. When a person of military age must choose between competing claims of national government and his own sense that a war is wrong, Lutheran theology can be especially helpful. We believe that moral decisions often involve ambiguity. We believe there is no such thing as a totally pure route to follow — which seems especially obvious when war participation is the issue. There are only relatively better or worse choices, and judgment about the morality of those choices will vary with the individual. Lutherans have insisted that even "lesser evil" in the realm of moral choice remains an evil — and this emphasis must be applied to the issue of war participation. For the Christian, the pain of making a hard choice remains, but anxiety over the need to justify oneself before God is removed. It is God who justifies the sinner. The individual is free to choose the course most likely to be helpful to the neighbor, as he understands the will of God, confident that God's forgiving grace covers the sin attached even to that choice.

3. We believe Lutheran churches are called upon today to inform and stimulate the consciences of young people especially for participation in the waging of peace and the retirement of war as a tool of national policy. In our practical teaching as Lutherans, there has been an assumption of the legitimacy of participation in war. At the same time, we have taught the New Testament admonition of nonresisting love to the neighbor, including the enemy, as the norm for personal ethics (Matthew 5, Luke 6, Romans 12). In a world of sin, the ethic of nonresisting love may be inappropriate as political policy for governments and yet followed faithfully by individuals. Nevertheless, we believe government should not put the burden of proof solely on those who would refuse to take part in war. On the contrary, a national government is obliged to persuade its young people of military age that a particular military policy is necessary.

4. When an individual confronts the issue of war participation, he or she would ideally include these elements in the process of decision-making:

a. I know that I live in a context of grace. I am set free in Christ (2 Corinthians 3.17). I need not fear acquiring new sorts of knowledge which may shatter cherished notions. I am free to know as much as can be known about the issue — and then to decide.

b. I will consider my decision in the light of various obligations: to obey God's will for human existence, e.g., love to neighbor, loyalty to government, elimination of injustice; to obey my political leaders, e.g., concerning defense of country, maintenance of peace.

c. I will weigh my possible actions against a set of criteria such as the just-war guidelines, seeking clarity about the ethical character of the proposed military activity.

d. I will consult with others in both my faith community and my political community.

e. I will make my decision, knowing it is in a belief framework which: affirms faith in God as Creator of all human life; affirms the enemy as God's creature; sees war as an expression of both the sin of man and the judgment of God; sees war as at best a barely tolerable lesser of evils; understands that, whichever choice I make, final certainty about the rightness of that choice may not be readily available to human perception.

5. The approach we have outlined for dealing with morally ambiguous choices should be shared consistently by our churches with military-age persons. But not only with those. We believe persons of all ages must be called to face the war/conscience question. The very young should be helped to think about the matter long before having to make a personal decision. Older persons continue to participate in a nation's peace/war behavior throughout their lives — as voters, taxpayers, shapers of opinion.

6. In addition to providing counsel and support for decision-making, some Lutheran congregations have chosen to assist military-age persons in another way. They have offered themselves publicly as supportive communities to military personnel who are struggling with a decision about their continuing service. Such support, properly given, does not interfere with the functioning of civil authority but seeks to provide spiritual and physical help to a person who is making a decision and facing its legal consequences. This sort of "sanctuary" can be a most meaningful ministry to troubled individuals and of great value to the congregation as it struggles to make a corporate decision.

7. We believe our churches need to give increased attention to providing guidance for the consciences of those who have already chosen to participate in military service. The church must witness to and in the military situation in order to restrain the abuse of military power. The church's ethical position concerning the uses of military force must be communicated effectively to its own faithful who are in the armed

forces, as well as its young who may be serving there in future years.

8. We see the current discussion about the nature of religious ministry to U.S. armed forces as healthy. We consider Lutheran participation in current studies of the question to be essential. There will continue to be need for armed forces, even if wars were to be effectively outlawed, just as armed police are usually used within societies which have outlawed intergroup violence. In this context, we restate the principle that Lutherans may serve in armed forces in good conscience. The precise form our ministry to the armed forces should take in the immediate future, however, is a subject to which our churches should give new attention.

### **Resources for Making World Justice and Peace a Priority**

1. There are two broad meanings of the word "peace" for the Christian. There is the peace a Christian has in Christ, with both God and neighbor. There is also peace among men, i.e., the elimination of violent conflicts between nations or groups within nations, a goal toward which the Christian works along with other human beings. Peace among men is a worthy end in itself; it also provides the most favorable context for the proclamation of the Gospel. God and the believer are active in pursuing peace of both kinds. Nor are they totally separable: the Christian has a fuller concept of what peace among men can be because of the relationship of peace he now knows through Christ.

2. Today more than ever, peace among men must be seen in the context of global human community. Wars, the resort to organized force of arms, will not be obsolete until other means of preventing or settling international and international disputes are available. An essential first step is to develop a global consciousness and a peace-mindedness among all peoples, but especially in the Great Power nations. It is not only pacifist Christians who should make a priority of peace-building, peace-making, and peace-keeping. To help U.S. Lutherans, most of whom are nonpacifists, to think about world peace with justice, we offer these observations:

a. There is inescapable tension for Christians in the quest for peace with justice. Christians are called to be both messengers of peace in a world of conflict and messengers of conflict in a world of false peace. That is, the "peace" of an unjust status quo is not the true peace which God wills for His world. If peace requires justice, and justice often comes accompanied by conflict, then there are situations in which the conflict will escalate into violence — until nonviolent means of resolving conflict are accepted by all parties. American Christians recall that their nation was born through armed revolution, which most Americans have seen in that context as a justifiable use of violence. Christians must always be suspicious, therefore, of any call for peace which aims merely to maintain existing but unfair power arrangements.

b. "Our greatest problem is not that some Christians are acting nonviolently for justice and peace while others are resorting to violence. The great problem is simply that most of our fellow Christians are not consciously acting on such matters at all."<sup>4</sup>

c. The only level of human social organization where prohibitions against the use of violence in resolving conflict are not enforced is the international level. Christians concerned about law and order must give attention to the lack of effective law and order at the global level. In a world of 140-plus nations, can the concept of unlimited sovereignty endure? The concept of world citizenship, perhaps an earlier day's utopianism, is the political realism of today's Spaceship Earth.

d. As one of the most international of the Christian communions, Lutherans should find it natural to *specialize* in cultivating supranational consciousness. As Christians, we should find it impossible to do otherwise. The one body in Christ is supranational. When Christians endorse the aims of any one nation in a way that leads them to do violence against fellow believers in another nation, there is scandalous disruption of the unity of Christ's body. As St. Paul reminds us, through the Cross Christ has already created "a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace" (Ephesians 2.15, *New English Bible*).

3. Lutherans are called to identify the resources in the Christian biblical and theological tradition which will contribute to building world community. American Lutherans are called, in addition, to become alert to the meaning of our nation's overwhelming economic presence in most parts of the world, as it applies to matters of peace with justice.

4. Lutherans are called further to see justice/peace as not just a political issue between peoples, but as God's march through history as well. War is God's judgment, as mystifying as that assertion may be. He it is who "delivers sinners up" to their own self-destruction. But God is also the one who "makes wars to cease." In the language of Ephesians, it is He who "makes peace," reconciling human beings to Himself and thereby also "breaking down the dividing wall of hostility" between peoples. In the face of God's judging us, the posture of repentance is called for. In the face of our call from God's Peacemaker, Christ, faith and further expansion of God's peace-making is our gift and assignment (Matthew 5.9).

5. Our concluding observation is that Lutherans for too long have left to others the biblical witness and bold commitment to world peace. No Christian may give to another his or her obligation to do the works of peace. And nowhere among Lutherans need "peace" be a fighting word. It is a word from the heart of the Gospel of reconciliation. Because God has conquered the enmity between us and Him, we are freed to join Him in ending the enmity between us and them. "Therefore, be at peace with one another" (1 Thessalonians 5.13, King James Version).

## **Section II: Recommendations for Study and Action**

What can individuals, local churches, and regional or national structures of our denominations do to work for peace? We offer the beginnings of a list of possibilities.

### **Through local churches or community groups:**

1. Practice repentance within the believing community over our failure in the world peace/justice area and develop commitment to change.
2. Study our confessional heritage in reference to war and peace, especially the Apostles' Creed, and Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession and its Apology.
3. Work for preaching and teaching that gives theological/ethical perspectives on international conflicts.
4. Study the moral and legal issues in conscientious objection to payment of taxes for war purposes.
5. Sponsor workshops on nonviolent alternatives to conflict resolution.
6. Encourage development of peace curricula in public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools.
7. Set up a parish panel, representing various viewpoints, which can help youth think through military-participation decisions.
8. Consider becoming a community of support (parish or group within parish) for military personnel struggling with a decision about continuing service.
9. Find out what the United Nations is doing in less-publicized arenas toward the goal of world peace, and work to strengthen support for the UN in your community.
10. Identify local coalitions working on peace issues and join those whose objectives you can share.
11. Become informed and let Congressional representatives know your views on national public policy issues such as peacetime conscription, selective conscientious objection, size of defense budget, conversion to demilitarized economy, amnesty for war objectors, peace tax legislation.
12. Resolve to make peace your business: praying for it daily, working to help it happen, refusing to leave it to experts — whether political, military, or peace-movement professionals.
13. Arrange for conversations with Christians in your area who have a pacifist ethical tradition (e.g., Mennonites, Brethren, Quakers).
14. Take a critical view of our national history, learning from instances where the justice claimed for our cause could be challenged by others.
15. Become so familiar with the just-war criteria that you automatically test against them any proposed use of violent force.

### **Through national church and interchurch agencies:**

1. Develop a program of resources for U.S. Lutherans on world community and international law.
2. Establish a peace information service on an inter-Lutheran basis.
3. Urge seminaries to expand curriculum which offers theological perspective on world peace/justice questions.
4. Setup programs of peace studies in church-related colleges.

5. Receive and share conclusions from fellow Lutherans who are experiencing other kinds of international situations, e.g., Southern Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East.
6. Reassess inter-Lutheran ministry to the military situation in terms of witness to the institution as well as care of the individual.
7. Work toward resolution of the issue of amnesty for war objectors in a way that will "facilitate reentry into the life of our nation" (from LC/USA 1972 annual meeting statement).
8. Urge appropriate church agencies to give priority attention to sensitizing our churches on questions of global community and justice.
9. Urge parish education boards to develop teaching tools for presenting biblical/theological resources on peace concerns at all age levels.
10. Stimulate creation of district/synod task forces on world peace.

## Appendix A

The following list of recent documents (1966-73) of U.S. Lutheran church bodies on peace/war/conscience questions includes policy statements, documents commended for study, and testimony presented before a Senate committee. The status of each is identified following the title. The complete document may be secured by writing to the appropriate office:

**ALC** — The American Lutheran Church, Office of Research and Analysis, 422 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415

**LCA** — Lutheran Church in America, Department for Church and Society, 231 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

**LCMS** — The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Office of the President, 500 North Broadway, St. Louis, Missouri 63102

**LC/USA** — Lutheran Council in the USA, Office of Communication and Interpretation, 315 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10010

### I. Conscientious Objection

LCA 1968, "Conscientious Objection," policy statement adopted by fourth biennial convention, Atlanta, Georgia, June 19-27.

LCMS 1969, "Statement on Conscientious Objection," resolution adopted by 48th regular convention, Denver, Colorado, July 11-18.

ALC 1970, "National Service and Selective Service Reform," adopted by fifth general convention, San Antonio, Texas, October 21-27; paragraphs 6-8 (support for selective objection) as "policy statement," paragraphs 1-5 (reforms in the draft, desirability of all-volunteer force) as "a statement expressing the judgment and corporate conviction" of the ALC.

LC/USA 1971, "On the Broadening of Statutory Provision for Conscientious Objectors," testimony before the Armed Services Committee of the U.S. Senate, February 9, expressing the position on selective conscientious objection of the three participating church bodies.

ALC 1972, "Amnesty in Perspective," adopted by sixth general convention, Minneapolis, October 9, "as a statement of comment and counsel addressed to the members of the congregations" of the ALC.

## **II. United States and Vietnam**

LCA 1966, "Vietnam," policy statement adopted by third biennial convention, Kansas City, Missouri, June 21-29.

ALC 1966, "Vietnam Involvement," adopted by third general convention, Minneapolis, October 19-25, and commended to members "to stimulate their thinking, promote a desire for informed discussion, and encourage fervent intercessory prayer."

ALC 1968, "Vietnam 1968," approved by fourth general convention, Omaha, Nebraska, October 16-22, and commended to congregations "as a statement to their members in order to stimulate their thinking, promote a desire for informed discussion, and encourage fervent intercessory prayer."

LCMS 1971, "Concern Over Our Involvement in Southeast Asia," resolution adopted by 49th regular convention, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 9-16.

LC/USA 1972, "Toward Reconciliation," adopted by representatives of participating churches at annual meeting, February 29, and transmitted to ALC, LCA, and LCMS "with the hope that they will commend it to their congregations for a response in study, prayer, acts of reconciliation, and the resolve to be caring communities."

ALC 1972, "American Military Involvement in Southeast Asia," adopted by sixth general convention, Minneapolis, October 9, with both majority and minority statements "of comment and counsel addressed to the members of congregations of the ALCI to aid them in their decisions and actions."

## **III. General War/Peace, International Affairs, Christian as Citizen**

LCA 1966, "Church and State: A Lutheran Perspective," policy statement adopted by third biennial convention, Kansas City, Missouri, June 21-29.

ALC 1966, "Church-State Relations in the USA," accepted by third general convention, Minneapolis, October 19-25, "as an expression of the policy and conviction of The American Lutheran Church on the issues treated therein."

ALC 1966, "War, Peace, and Freedom," adopted by third general convention, Minneapolis, October 19-25, "as expressing its views.. . as a guide to its members and as a contribution to public discussion."

ALC 1966, "Christians in Politics," adopted by third general convention, Minneapolis, October 19-25, "as an encouragement to its members to engage wholeheartedly as Christians in the processes of politics by which their communities, states and nation are governed."

LCMS 1967, "Civil Obedience and Disobedience," report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to the LCMS, published January 19.

LCMS 1967, "Concern for War and International Crisis," resolution adopted by 47th regular convention, New York City, July 7-14.

LCMS 1968, "Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship," report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to the LCMS, published April 26.

ALC 1968, "Hunger in the World," approved by fourth general convention, Omaha, Nebraska, October 16-22, "as a position paper."

LCA 1970, "World Community: Ethical Imperatives in an Age of Interdependence," policy statement adopted by fifth biennial convention, Minneapolis, June 25-July 2.

ALC 1972, "Peace, Justice, and Human Rights," adopted by sixth general convention, Minneapolis, October 6, "as a statement of comment and counsel addressed to the members of the congregations" of the ALC.

LC/USA 1973, "Statement Regarding Ratification of the Genocide Convention," adopted by representatives of participating churches, annual meeting March 2; suggests those churches "encourage their congregations and members to study the issues involved ... provide study materials ... stimulate the exercise of citizenship by their members in communicating insights" to government officials. our land may not be healed simply by an end to the fighting.

"We affirm that reconciliation is fundamental to the Christian life and that forgiveness is central to the meaning of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. The concern of the churches must be for understanding, acceptance, and reconciliation among Americans who disagree about the war.

"We cannot claim fully to know God's mind and judgment, but we can appeal to Him for guidance in resolving the division among us. We believe it is in the interest of furthering our national healing that the following particulars are offered: ..."

## **End Notes**

1. The statement, adopted by the Lutheran Council in annual meeting, February 1972, is titled "Toward Reconciliation." The full text reads: "Both the events leading to war and the consequences of war remind us humbly of man's sinful nature and of God's call for man's repentance. As a nation we have become

deeply divided by our participation in the Vietnam War. We pray for a speedy end of that war. However, since human memory tends to nurse old wounds, the division in our land may not be healed simply by an end to the fighting.

"1. We call for acts of reconciliation between those who believe they served their nation by supporting this war and those who believe they served their nation by refusing to support this war.

"2. We urge loving concern for those who conscientiously participated and now return to a society which may forget their service or give it only a negative meaning. We express our approval of new initiative from both government and private agencies in job training and placement, drug rehabilitation, and other helps toward reentry to civilian life.

"3. We urge loving concern also for those who refused to participate for reasons of conscience, including those who chose to face prosecution or to leave our land and seek refuge in another. We express our approval of new initiative from both government and private agencies to resolve the question of amnesty and to provide services, in order to facilitate reentry into the life of our nation.

"4. We transmit this statement to the participating church bodies with the hope that they will commend it to their congregations for a response in study, prayer, acts of reconciliation, and the resolve to be caring communities. Let all seek from God the strength to accept one another, the willingness to renew relationships, the recommitment to faith in God's desire that His healing come to all men, and the trust that through God's guidance mankind may find peace and the means for its maintenance."

2. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972; see especially p. 157.
3. Richard J. Niebanck in *Conscience, War and the Selective Objector* (New York City: Board of Social Ministry, Lutheran Church in America, 1972).
4. From Report of Church and Society to Unit I Committee, Central Committee of World Council of Churches, Utrecht, August 1972.