

# CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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, 1924, 1922, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1940, 1944, 1948, 1956, 1958

### I. POLICY

**1922: Minutes, 3rd Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 418, 419.**

It is not for the Church to lay down definite programs of action, or to formulate laws, and seek to impose these upon the civil authorities. This must be left to the civil powers themselves and to those in the State who are charged with the duties and responsibilities of government. But it is the right and duty of the Church to instruct its own members, and to bear testimony before all men, and especially before all rulers and legislators, concerning those principles of righteousness, and justice, and good will, and loving service, which ought to control nations as well as individuals in their relations and dealings with each other. It is also the right and duty of the Church, as a witness for Christ and the servant of the truth, to remind men that nations as well as individuals are amenable to the eternal laws of righteousness, and responsible to God the moral Governor of the earth, who will assuredly punish them if they do not fear Him and keep His commandments, and deal justly with each other and with all men.

**1944: Minutes, 14th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 347, 397.**

The Convention declared:

That the Church, recognizing the Christian Church as the strongest bulwark against oppression, urge its pastors and people to combat through preaching, instruction, public discussion and concerted action the growing tendency manifested in our country to curtail the liberties of the Christian man.

That in view of the increasing power manifested by organized evils in the communities of our nation, which evils can be resisted and overcome best by organized groups which recognize the destructive power of these forces, the Church hereby records its approval of the organization of Christian citizens, under proper leadership, into such groups as Christian Civic Leagues, Law and Order Societies and the like, for the purpose of studying and combating these evils to the end that they may be eliminated from their communities.

## **II. PROCLAMATION**

**1922: Minutes, 3rd Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 414, 42i.**

The first and greatest need of the hour ... is positive preaching on the consequences of sin and the blessings of the redemption wrought upon the cross by Christ. The preaching must relate itself to the lives of our citizens of today. The references to sin in the epistolary literature must not be limited to Galatia and Rome but must be applied to conditions in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and intermediate points.

**1936: Minutes, 10th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 374, 378.**

We reaffirm our conviction that it is the task of the Church to proclaim principle, and to be concerned about root causes, rather than symptoms of moral evil in society, and request our pastors and lay-leaders to give further study to Dr. Greevefs Facts and Forces in the Social Order," so that we may not be tempted to substitute the legalistic regulation of life for the power of the Gospel in our efforts to make society Christian.

**1940: Minutes, 12th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 331, 340.**

The Convention declared:

That the Church reaffirm its conviction that the one certain method of producing a better social order lies in the power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, to transform lives, and through them to change social conditions.

## **III. STUDY**

**1924: Minutes, 4th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 273, 274.**

Our recognition of the sinfulness of the human heart in every age must not deter us, but rather stir within us the holy purpose of restudying the Word of God, the better to apply its principles to ourselves and to the age in which we live. We recognize the importance of mutual study and conference and hence welcome the announcement of the holding of a "Christian Conference on Life and Work" at Stockholm in 1925.

We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation of the Publication Board in making possible the study books<sup>1</sup> which are being furnished the Church by the Committee and ask that our pastors note the appearance of these books in their calendars and use their best endeavors to introduce the study books in such ways and through such channels as may to them seem most fitting.

**1932: Minutes, 8th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 418, 419.**

Resolved, That the outline presented above<sup>2</sup> be referred to the congregations and educational agencies of the United Lutheran Church for study and discussion, preferably in groups, dividing and adapting matter according to circumstances, and arranging for a sufficient number of periods, with efficient leaders, to cover the subject with due deliberation, and that we ask the Executive Board to consider the possibilities of more widespread publication of this report.

**1934: Minutes, 9th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 481, 482.**

The Convention asked:

That the urgent request of the Church (see 1932 Minutes, page 418) to all pastors, congregations and educational agencies to conduct group study and discussion of "Facts and Forces in the Social Order" be renewed.<sup>2</sup>

That the Church continue its efforts, by the enlistment of editors, teachers, experienced pastors and others, to furnish practical helps for those who, moved by right principles, seek to apply them to the problems of conduct in current life.

**1940: Minutes, 12th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 331-32, 341.**

The Convention stated:

That recognizing the importance of the study and discussion of social questions in the light of Christian faith we call upon our synods, conferences, and congregations to arrange for the holding of local institutes, forums, and discussion classes to study how the relation of man may become more in harmony with God's ideal in Christ.

**1948: Minutes, 16th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 302, 308, 339.**

The Convention called for:

A scholarly study, which may eventuate in a definitive book, of the Lutheran approach to Christian social responsibility. This book should bring together and clarify the full teachings of Scripture on this subject, the witness of our confessions thereto, and all the pertinent pronouncements of the ULCA. Its chief purpose would be to school Lutherans in the Scriptural and confessional grounds for social action. A study book growing out of this definitive study would be desirable for use by laymen.

**1948: Ibid., pp. 303, 338.**

The Board of Education, we believe, should encourage our colleges to expand further their educational services off the campus so that more young people and adults not able to enroll as regular pupils may have opportunities of finding the Christian approach to the problem of our times through courses on, "The Bible," "Race Relations," "Labor-Management Relations," "Peace and the United Nations," "Christian Citizenship," "Psychology of Religious Education," "Christian Ethics," etc.

**1956: Minutes, 20th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 1157, 1174.**

The Convention voted:

That the Board of Social Missions be given the responsibility for exploring in the United States and Canada a program of group fellowship and discussion similar in purpose to the evangelical academies developed in our sister church in Germany.

**1958: Minutes, 21ST Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 767, 782.**

it is recommended that the Board of Social Missions be instructed to develop a program of Faith and Life Institutes in the United States and Canada, and that it be commended for its progress with these institutes to date.