

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



A social statement...

FOR PEACE IN GOD'S WORLD

Adopted by more than a two-thirds majority vote (803-30) as a social statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the fourth Churchwide Assembly on August 20, 1995, at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America share with the Church of Jesus Christ in all times and places the calling to be peacemakers. In the liturgy of Holy Communion we pray “for the peace of the whole world,” asking, “Lord, have mercy.” Our petition unites faith in the Triune God with our world’s sufferings and hopes.

At the end of a tumultuous and violent century, we share with people everywhere hope for a more peaceful and just world. With this statement on international peace, we strive to strengthen our global perspective as individual Christians and as a church body, in spite of strong currents that push us to turn in on ourselves. As our world discards the mind-set of the Cold War and faces the new threats and opportunities of a changing time, we join with others in searching for what makes for peace.

Most importantly, this statement recalls that the basis of the Church’s peace-calling is in God’s final peace, the peace of God’s eternal reign. That calling is to proclaim the Gospel of God’s final peace and to work for earthly peace. This statement understands earthly peace to mean relationships among and within nations that are just, harmonious, and free from war. It offers direction as we act to keep and to build earthly peace on the eve of a new millennium.

We are grateful for the legacy of peacemaking given to our church by its predecessor communities.¹ We confess that too often we have fallen short in our responsibility for peace. We pray for forgiveness, and for the faith that in love acts for earthly peace. We dedicate ourselves anew to pray and to work for peace in God’s world.

1. THE GOD OF PEACE

The biblical narrative reveals God's resolve for peace.

God created all things and gives unity, order, and purpose to a world of different creatures. All humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), made for life in community—with God, with others, and with the rest of creation.

All humans also are bound together in sin. Sin, the rupture in our relation with God, profoundly disrupts creation. Centeredness in self, rather than in God, destroys the bonds of human community. In bondage to sin, we fall captive to fear. Sin entangles our social structures. The Bible describes the power of sin: ingratitude, deceit, distrust, hatred, greed, envy, arrogance, sloth, corruption, debauchery, aggression, cruelty, oppression, and injustice. These violate community and generate killing and war.

God nonetheless preserves the world, limiting the effects of sin, bringing good even out of evil and making earthly peace possible. Through the Law, the sovereign God of the nations holds all responsible for their neighbor, protects community, and blesses creation ever anew. God works often in hidden and inscrutable ways. God's judgment comes upon a sinful humanity for failure to live together justly and peacefully, and calls all to repentance and faith in God. God's just wrath against all that causes chaos and destruction is in the service of the divine resolve for peace.

God's resolve for peace was manifested in a new way through one people, chosen to be a blessing to all. Through the people of Israel, God acted so as to reconcile creation, promising a reign in which peace and justice will kiss each other (Psalm 85).

God's promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Rejected by humans, Jesus was confirmed by God who raised him from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that "on earth" there might be "peace" (Luke 2:14). In bringing this peace,

- ◆ Jesus taught love for one's enemies;
- ◆ he reached out to the oppressed, downtrodden, and rejected of the earth;
- ◆ he prayed for his enemies while himself being rejected on the cross;

- ◆ above all, through Jesus' violent death, God redeemed the world, "for...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10).

This reconciling love of enemy discloses how deeply peace is rooted in who God is. The cross of Christ enacts God's resolve for peace once-for-all. "The God of peace"² suffers with and for a suffering and sinful world so that all of creation will enjoy the loving community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"The Gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15) heals our broken relationship with God, removing the ultimate root of violence and injustice. The Gospel breaks down the dividing walls of hostility among people, creates a new humanity—making Christ Jesus "our peace" (Ephesians 2:13-22)—and promises the reconciliation of all things in Christ.³ The peace of the Gospel is the final peace God intends for all. The baptized community already takes part in this peace through the Word and faith as it hopes for creation's fulfillment in "a new heaven and a new earth" where death and pain "will be no more" (Revelation 21:1, 4).

God's steadfast resolve for peace encompasses our time as it does all times. In creation and redemption, through Law and Gospel, God's faithful love acts for peace.

2. THE CHURCH, A COMMUNITY FOR PEACE

A. Divine Calling

Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit calls and gathers a people from all nations to worship and witness to the God of peace. The called and gathered are sinners, forgiven and righteous on account of Jesus Christ.

In publicly gathering to proclaim and celebrate God's Gospel of peace, the Church uniquely contributes to earthly peace. Its most valuable mission for peace is to keep alive news of God's resolve for peace, declaring that all are responsible to God for earthly peace and announcing forgiveness, healing, and hope in the name of Jesus Christ. In praying for peace in the world, in interceding for all who suffer from war and injustice and for those in authority, the Church acts for peace.

The vastly different Christian communities of faith that gather in all parts of the globe are one in the Gospel, called “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-6). The Church, with a diversity of gifts, contributes to earthly peace **in living the oneness we have received**—in our congregations, in our church body, and in the Church universal. Nonetheless, divisions among competing groups (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) and human differences frequently outweigh our oneness in Christ (Galatians 3:28) and abuse our divine calling.

Where the Church does live in unity, overcoming such divisions and welcoming the stranger and outcast, the Church contributes to earthly peace. Where the followers of Jesus refuse to repay evil with evil but turn the other cheek and go the extra mile (Matthew 5:38-42), where in their life together Christians’ creative, nonviolent responses to hostile acts open up possibilities for reconciliation, the Church contributes to earthly peace. Where churches in different countries work in solidarity for human dignity, the Church contributes to earthly peace. Peace in the community of faith serves by example the ministry and message of reconciliation entrusted to the Church for the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

By equipping the faithful to act for peace in all their communities, the Church contributes to earthly peace. In recalling our identity in baptism, in gathering in peace around the Lord’s Table, in telling the biblical narrative, in teaching faith, hope, and love, the Church provides the basics of peacemaking for all of life. The Church is the school of the Holy Spirit, who molds and equips us to be peacemakers. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22). With its ministry of Word and Sacrament, the Church sustains believers in their conscientious decisions, including people who serve in the military and defense industries, and people who refuse to participate in all wars or in a particular war.

B. Faithful Presence

When the Church fulfills the mandates of its divine calling, it helps in word and deed to create an environment conducive to peace. When the Church forsakes these mandates, it also fails to serve earthly peace. Through faithfulness in its life and activities as a community for peace, the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit becomes a presence for peace that disturbs, reconciles, serves, and deliberates.

The Church is a **disturbing presence** when it refuses to be silent and instead speaks the truth in times when people shout out, “‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). The Church is this presence when it names and resists idols that lead to false security, injustice, and war, and calls for repentance. We therefore denounce beliefs and actions that:

- ◆ elevate our nation or any nation or people to the role of God;
- ◆ find ultimate security in weapons and warfare;
- ◆ ordain the inherent right of one people, race, or civilization to rule over others;
- ◆ promise a perfect, peaceful society through the efforts of a self-sufficient humanity; and
- ◆ despair of any possibility for peace.

As a **reconciling presence**, the Church creates bonds among different peoples, whether local or distant. It has special opportunities to bring conflicting parties together and to keep tenuous lines of communication open during times of crisis and war. The Church serves reconciliation by countering religious movements—including ones claiming to be Christian—that preach and practice hate and violence, by challenging stereotypes of “the enemy,” and by encouraging imaginative solutions to conflicts.

The Church is called to be a **servicing presence** in society. The Church serves when it holds power accountable, advocates justice, stands with those who are poor and vulnerable, provides sanctuary, and meets human need. The Church serves when it supports efforts by governments and others to secure a just peace and when it encourages public debate about what is right and good in international and domestic affairs. It serves by calling for compassion in meeting human needs.

The Church as a community for peace is also to be a **deliberating presence** in society. As a community of moral deliberation,⁴ the Church is a setting of freedom and respect where believers with different perspectives may learn from one another in the unity of faith. Issues that shape our world—including dilemmas of military service and confronting human evil through nonviolence—are proper themes for discussion in the Church.

The Holy Spirit calls the Church to be a community for peace, yet, as that community, we fall short and contradict our calling. God’s disturbing Word comes especially to us, judging us and calling us to confession and repentance. At the cross of Christ, the Church stands with the whole world

under God's judgment and mercy. Daily we must return to our baptism, die again with Christ to sin's power, and be raised anew to live by the Spirit.

3. IN GOD'S WORLD, A FAITH...

A. Active for Peace

Trust in God's promise of final peace freely given in Jesus Christ alone drives us to engage fully in the quest to build earthly peace. Yet we know this quest is complex and our accomplishments provisional. Faith in the crucified and risen Lord strengthens us to persist even when God seems absent in a violent and unjust world, and when weariness and hopelessness threaten to overwhelm us.

Through the cross of Christ, God calls us to serve the needs of our neighbor, especially of those groups and individuals who suffer and are vulnerable. The cross assures us that even in our vulnerability, suffering, and death, God's power is active through us. In the cross we recognize that forgiveness, reconciliation, and love of enemy are essential to our efforts to build earthly peace.

Our everyday communities form the arena where faith acts in love for peace. God calls us to be peacemakers in and through the many overlapping circles of communities through which God gives us life: our homes and friendships, neighborhoods and work places, congregations and volunteer associations, towns and cities, nations and international communities. As citizens we are to seek to influence our nation's actions for peace among the nations. Sharing a common humanity with all people, we are called to work for peace throughout the globe.

Our many communities mutually influence one another. Attitudes, loyalties, and commitments learned in families help shape our views of other peoples and nations. War may disrupt and even devastate family life. Efforts to create just and secure communities within our nation go hand-in-hand with the pursuit of peace among nations.⁵

Because Christians act for peace in varied settings, our responsibilities, experiences, interests, and perspectives differ. We often disagree on how to build earthly peace, but biblical insight provides a common context for discerning direction.

B. Guided by Biblical Insight

In faith we receive our world as God’s creation. We affirm therefore that **earthly peace is built on the recognition of the unity and goodness of created existence, the oneness of humanity, and the dignity of every person.** Peace is difference in unity. It requires both respect for the uniqueness of others—finite persons in particular communities—and acknowledgement of a common humanity. We advocate an earthly peace that builds on freedom and responsibility, encourages compassion, and embraces justice and care of the earth.

Because all are sinners before God, efforts to build **earthly peace must recognize sin’s persistent, pervasive, and subtle power.** We easily deceive ourselves about our own righteousness. Even our best intentions can produce harmful results. Our efforts must take account of the human tendency to dominate and destroy, and must recognize those “principalities” and “powers” (Ephesians 6:12, RSV) that cause strife in our world. We also advocate an earthly peace that provides security from violence and aggression, seeks just order in place of tyranny or anarchy, checks unrestrained power, and defends and enhances the life of people who are poor and powerless.

In spite of human enmity—toward God, among humans, and with the rest of creation—**God continues to work through people, their communities and structures, to make earthly peace possible.** We therefore cooperate with and learn from others, and we value the God-given knowledge, wisdom, virtue, imagination, and creativity found among all peoples. We support structures and processes for ordering relationships that are sufficiently just, open, and dynamic for people to confront injustice and conflict nonviolently.

Because we are created as whole persons, **building earthly peace encompasses all the dimensions of human society.** These dimensions include the patterns of beliefs and values that give meaning to life (culture, including religion), the structures and practices that sustain life (economics), as well as the structures and processes that allow communities to make and enforce decisions (politics). We believe that God works through human culture, economics, and politics, and intends them to restrain evil and promote the common good.

Earthly peace is not the same as the promised peace of God’s present and future eternal reign. As a human achievement built in the middle of strife, earthly peace is often fleeting and always partial. It is difficult to build and maintain. It is easily and frequently disrupted by violence and war. All the more, then, is earthly peace a most precious gift. It embodies God’s intention for creation, serves human and planetary good, and gives space to proclaim the Gospel, keeping hope in God alive.

C. Lived in Our Time

In hope we live out our faith in community with others and together strive for earthly peace. As we do so, we experience a world that is increasingly interconnected. People work, buy, and sell in a global market. The media make us present at happenings around the world, and new communication technologies increase available information. Economic and technological developments make increased integration both possible and necessary. The global dangers of nuclear weapons, environmental degradation, and population pressure also create greater interdependence. International trafficking in illegal drugs contributes to violence in all parts of the world.

All people experience these global changes from within particular and limited communities. The movement toward greater integration affects the world’s diverse communities differently—from threatening their identity and existence to enhancing their life. Different communities respond differently to the changes. Integration often accentuates the attention people give to their particular communities. Familial, religious, cultural, ethnic, and national communities continue to be decisive sources for peoples’ sense of belonging, outlook, and perception of their interests.

The tension-filled interplay of these two dynamics—here called integration and particularity—shape today’s quest for peace. Integration promises broader global community; particularity promises deeper personal community. Integration threatens to bring inequality and domination by unaccountable power; particularity threatens to bring fragmentation and violent conflict by groups that deny the humanity of those who differ from them. Recognizing both promise and threat, we seek an earthly peace that affirms unity in our diversity.

Good and evil are intricately interwoven in the interplay of these two dynamics. The benefits of unparalleled economic development in some

parts of the world contrast with unrelenting poverty in others. The impact of a global economy on local communities varies. Basic cultural questions become even more important as the encounter of cultures intensifies. In and among religions there exist increased dialogue and mutual understanding. But there also are splintering, intense hostility toward other groups, and support for violent crusades against the enemy.

States, vastly unequal in their power, exercise their sovereignty in a thickening web of international organizations and agreements, regionally and globally. Economic integration diminishes governments' ability to determine their own economic policies. National borders are ever more permeable by outside influences. The movement of people across borders due to war or poverty is massive and controversial. Moreover, numerous states face disintegration from within when minority groups, usually ethnic communities, seek their own state or autonomy. In vicious civil wars civilians often are targeted by armed groups. Such wars raise new questions about what, if anything, the international community can and should do in the face of internal conflicts.

4. POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

A. Acting As Citizens

We recognize the awesome responsibility political leaders, policy makers, and diplomats have for peace in our unsettled time. In a democracy all citizens share in this responsibility. We encourage participation by Christians in the affairs of government.

Our faith as Christians gives a distinctive quality to our life as citizens. Love born of faith calls us not to harm others and to help them in every need. The Scriptures provide us direction. Yet we do not possess uniquely Christian international policies or a divine or biblical politics for our nation. For political guidance we also must rely upon reason and compassion, and examine and draw upon common human experience through which, we believe, God is at work creating and preserving the world.

For the welfare of our neighbors, we in company with others must press for what is right and good within the limits and possibilities of the actual situation. Leaders and citizens make decisions among many competing goods and interests when not all can be realized. In the uncertain task of

calculating the probable outcomes of these decisions and choosing the best alternative, we must view the desired ends of action in light of the means and resources available.

Political authority relies on both the consent of the people and the threat and use of coercion. In accordance with the Lutheran tradition,⁶ we affirm that governments may legitimately employ such measures as law and its enforcement, police protection, provisions for the common defense, and resistance to aggression. We also affirm that governments should vigorously pursue less coercive measures over more coercive ones: consent over compulsion, nonviolence over violence, diplomacy over military engagement, and deterrence over war.

With its significant economic, political, cultural, and military power, the United States plays a vital leadership role in world affairs. It cannot and should not withdraw or isolate itself from the rest of the world. Neither should it seek to control or police the world. Global challenges cannot be addressed by the United States alone; yet few can be met without the United States' participation.

In pursuing their interests, all nations, including the United States, have an obligation to respect the interests of other states and international actors and to comply with international law. Nations should seek their own common good in the context of the global common good. International bodies should work for the welfare of all nations.

Citizens need to give careful attention to how we in the United States perceive our national interest and interpret our national identity, since what states do depends in large measure on their views of their own interests and identity. Sin's power often makes itself felt in arrogant and self-righteous views of national identity, and in narrow, short-term, and absolute views of national interest.

We call for an imaginative attention to the interests and welfare of other nations, especially of those that are viewed as "enemies" or that are considered unimportant for our nation's interests. We expect expressions of our nation's identity to build on the best of our traditions, to respect others' identity, and to open up paths for mutual understanding. For the sake of a greater good or for reasons of conscience, citizens may need to oppose a prevailing understanding or practice of national identity and interest. Citizens may even need to resist oppressive government.

B. Deciding about Wars

Wars, both between and within states, represent a horrendous failure of politics. The evil of war is especially evident in the number of children and other noncombatants who suffer and die. We lament that the Church has blessed crusades and wars in the name of Jesus Christ. We recognize with sorrow that too often people formed in the Lutheran tradition have passively accepted their government's call-to-arms or have too readily endorsed war to resolve conflicts.

First and foremost, love of neighbor obligates us to act to prevent wars and to seek alternatives to them, especially in view of modern weapons and their proliferation. For this reason, this statement focuses on building a just peace and identifies tasks that create conditions for peace. Yet wars and their threat still thrust themselves upon us, and we cannot avoid making decisions about them.

In doing so, we face conflicting moral claims and agonizing dilemmas. Helping the neighbor in need may require protecting innocent people from injustice and aggression. While we support the use of nonviolent measures, there may be no other way to offer protection in some circumstances than by restraining forcibly those harming the innocent. We do not, then—for the sake of the neighbor—rule out possible support for the use of military force. We must determine in particular circumstances whether or not military action is the lesser evil.

We seek guidance from the principles of the “just/unjust war” tradition. While permitting recourse to war in exceptional circumstances, these principles intend to limit such occasions by setting forth conditions that must be met to render military action justifiable. We begin with a strong presumption against all war; support for and participation in a war to restore peace is a tragic concession to a sinful world. Any decision for war must be a mournful one.

The principles for deciding about wars include right intention, justifiable cause, legitimate authority, last resort, declaration of war aims, proportionality, and reasonable chance of success. The principles for conducting war include noncombatant immunity and proportionality.⁷ The principles for post-war conduct include showing mercy to the defeated and assisting them to rebuild. Justifiable national and international commitment of forces to armed conflicts depend on adherence to these principles.

This approach incorporates the hope that even war may be subject to political ends (peace) and moral considerations. At their best, these principles provide a moral framework, ambiguous and imprecise though it be, for public deliberation about war, and guidance for persons deciding what to do when faced with the dilemmas of war. In using them, Christians need to be prepared to say “no” to wars in which their nation participates.

These principles are important in international law and in military codes of conduct. They are the basis for our church’s unequivocal rejection of nuclear war⁸ and for its support for “selective conscientious objection.”⁹ In taking this approach to war, this church supports the vocation of men and women in the military who in conscience directly face the ambiguities of relative evils, and who may suffer and die to defend their neighbor.

From the posture of the just/unjust war tradition, the aim of all politics is peace. Any political activity that involves coercion should be held accountable to just/unjust war principles. They are important for evaluating movements, sanctions, embargoes, boycotts, trade policies to reward or punish, and other coercive but nonviolent measures.

The Church and others often fail to teach and apply the just/unjust war principles. These principles can be and have been misused in self-serving ways. As an evolving tradition, these principles need constant testing in light of the changing nature of warfare. Their proper use depends on political wisdom and historical knowledge of the situation. We affirm this approach humbly and self-critically. We encourage further deliberation about its faithfulness and adequacy.

Another voice with deep historical roots in the Christian tradition also speaks in our church. This church today needs the witness of its members who in the name of Jesus Christ refuse all participation in war, who commit themselves to establish peace and justice on earth by nonviolent power alone, and who may suffer and die in their discipleship. We support members who conscientiously object to bearing arms in military service.

We must continue the perennial discussion in the Church universal about whether Christian love and discipleship prohibit participation in war in all circumstances, or whether they may permit it in some circumstances. This discussion poses important and difficult biblical, historical, theological, and ethical questions. Even when Christians may differ on these questions,

there is still a basis for practical cooperation in their common presumption against violence and commitment to peace.

We make decisions about participation in war knowing that what we do or do not do falls short of what love requires. No matter what conscientious people decide, they remain under God's judgment and in need of God's mercy given in the cross of Christ.

5. TASKS

What should we do to keep, make, and build international peace today? This section identifies tasks and arenas for action. It draws out implications of our faith and incorporates judgments of reason, which always are open to development and correction. Naming these tasks voices our hope that international relations can be ordered in ways that contribute to a just, free, secure, and nonviolent world. Yet we pursue this hope within the constraints and brokenness of our complex world.

A. A Culture of Peace

Foster a dynamic vision of difference in unity. All people in their amazing diversity are God's creatures, sinners for whom Christ died. In a time when increasing integration endangers the bonds of communities and when an idolatrous allegiance to one's own community endangers our oneness, we must voice with clarity the powerful vision of difference in unity. This vision calls us to engage differences, not to ignore or fear them. The hope for earthly peace challenges people to strengthen their own particular communities in ways that promote respect and appreciation for people in other communities, for all share a common humanity. We urge our congregations to promote understanding through people-to-people exchanges.

In many situations today, religious differences are a source of enmity. Religion is used to incite people to violence. The Church faces new challenges in being a reconciling presence among the religions of the world. We need to learn from Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others, discovering the ways they strive for peace, correcting distorted images, and working for mutual understanding.¹⁰ We rejoice where people of different religions work together to overcome hostility.

Promote respect for human rights. “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” These words from the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are consistent with our understanding of humans created in God’s image. Human rights provide a common universal standard of justice for living with our differences, and they give moral and legal standing to the individual in the international community.

We therefore will continue to teach about human rights, protest their violation, advocate their international codification, and support effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance with them. Our priorities are to:

- ◆ oppose genocide and other grievous violations of human rights such as torture, religious and racial oppression, forced conscription (impressment), forced labor, and war crimes (including organized rape);
- ◆ provide for the most basic necessities of the poor; and
- ◆ defend the human rights of groups most susceptible to violations, especially all minorities, women, and children.

Counter and transform attitudes that encourage violence. A significant cause of violent conflict, domestically and internationally, are attitudes that view violence as a readily acceptable way of dealing with differences and disputes. Fear of others, disregard for people’s dignity, personal experiences of violence, and images in movies, television, videos, and music that glorify violence and war help form these attitudes.¹¹

The Gospel strikes at the heart of what promotes such attitudes, freeing us from fear to see others as brothers and sisters for whom Christ died and lives. The media should depict honestly the violence, brutality, and terror of war and should expose falsehoods. We encourage efforts in education, the arts, and communication to portray the beauty and goodness of peace and to enhance appreciation of our world’s diversity.

Strengthen the will and ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. Disagreements, conflicts, and competition among nations, groups, and individuals are inevitable, but wars are not. One essential ingredient for reducing the likelihood of war is the steady resolve and intense effort of the parties involved to settle conflict nonviolently. Another essential ingredient is the ability to explore all avenues for common interests, to

compromise interests, to conciliate differences, and to prevent, moderate, or isolate destructive conflicts. These ingredients are as vital for resolving conflict in international diplomacy as they are in families and communities.

We renew our commitment to carry on this peace task through education and practice, especially with children and youth. We call upon nations to provide leadership, education, structures, and funds for the peaceful resolution of conflict. Nations should do so with the same commitment that they prepare people to settle disputes with military force.

B. An Economy with Justice

Insist that peace and economic justice belong together. Massive hunger and poverty, alongside abundance and wealth, violate the bonds of our common humanity. Such economic disparities are a cause of conflict and war and spur our efforts to build just economic relationships necessary for peace. Justice points toward an economy ordered in ways that:

- ◆ respect human dignity;
- ◆ provide the necessities of life;
- ◆ distribute goods and burdens fairly and equitably; and
- ◆ are compatible with a life-sustaining ecosystem.¹²

Sustainable growth and fair distribution are vital in creating economic justice. Both should enable all to participate in the economy. Global economic integration should enhance economic well-being among and within nations. Fiscal policy, business practices, investment policies, and personal life styles, including patterns of consumption, should contribute to economic justice and the long-term sustainability of our planet.

Support just arrangements to regulate the international economy. In a world with growing economic integration and political fragmentation, global enterprises are increasingly unaccountable to either national or international standards. This lack of accountability can be a source of injustice and violent conflict.

We support efforts by nations to improve regulation and coordination of the global economy through reciprocal and mutually advantageous arrangements. International trade and financial agreements should help to increase partnership, prevent commercial wars among nations, protect the environment, provide assistance with debt management, check abuse by

multinational companies, and protect poorer nations. Developing countries need better opportunities to foster capital investment and to profit through fair and open trade.

Revitalize Aid. We affirm that our nation has responsibility to contribute a portion of its wealth to people in poorer nations through effective economic assistance. Assistance should come in the form of both humanitarian aid needed to relieve the consequences of disasters and development assistance that contributes to improvements in the quality of life in developing economies. While the United States has been generous in providing humanitarian aid, our nation dramatically trails the rest of the industrialized world in providing development assistance relative to our production of wealth.¹³ We support continued and increased assistance by the United States, and call for its gradual realignment toward more development assistance and a proportional reduction in subsidies to purchase weapons.

The guiding purpose of economic assistance should be to reduce hunger and poverty in sustainable and environmentally sound ways. Aid should be provided in ways that promote human rights and build self-reliant individuals, communities, and nations. Aid should be responsive to the need of many countries to reduce population pressure through greater opportunity for women and through voluntary, safe, and reliable means of birth control. Aid also should require accountability on the part of recipient governments. We support bilateral and multilateral aid and the use of non-governmental organizations as channels to reach local communities.

Support economic conversion. While recognizing its continuing and changing security responsibilities, the United States should evaluate carefully the balance between legitimate security needs and other priority uses of government revenues, and reduce military expenditures wherever possible. Where reductions occur, communities, businesses, and governments on all levels have responsibility to develop strategies that contribute to the well-being of those who bear the greatest burden of this economic conversion. We encourage congregations that serve these populations to participate in ministries of reconciliation and support to persons in economic and professional transition.

C. A Politics of Cooperation

Strengthen international cooperation. Belief in a common humanity, increasing global integration, and national self-interest all compel this task. In the Charter of the United Nations and in other international agreements, nations have stated how they believe their relations should be ordered. Normally nations comply with these principles. States pledge to respect the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of other states and not to intervene in their internal affairs, and to honor the self-determination of peoples. They also pledge to fulfill international obligations, to cooperate with other states, and to settle disputes peacefully. While states have the right of self-defense and may resist aggression, they are otherwise to abstain from the threat or use of military force.¹⁴ At present, such principles offer the best framework for a just ordering of international relations. Citizens have responsibility to hold governments accountable to these principles.

As is evident in internal conflicts today, however, the principles of international law are at times in conflict. For example, when a state massively violates the fundamental rights and freedoms of its people, particularly with acts of genocide, does the principle of nonintervention still hold? In our judgment it does not. Because of its responsibility for human rights, the international community, through its regional and global organizations, has an obligation to respond and a right to intervene, with military force if necessary. Yet any such intervention must be carried out with extreme caution and be accountable to the principles of the just/unjust war tradition.

In support for international cooperation, we:

- ◆ call for building confidence among nations through forms of state conduct that are legal, nonviolent, truthful, reliable, and open, and for minimizing all forms of covert action;
- ◆ advocate increased respect for and adherence to international law;
- ◆ support viable, long-term efforts to strengthen the United Nations as a forum for international cooperation and peace, including the International Court of Justice,¹⁵ and regional courts;
- ◆ support creation of an International Criminal Court, which would hold individuals accountable for violations of international law, for example, in cases of genocide and war crimes; and
- ◆ encourage continuing deliberation on the international community's responsibility for internal conflicts.

Improve structures of common security. In an increasingly integrated world nations cannot and should not seek only their own security. Their goal should be common or mutually assured security. Cultural interaction and political and economic cooperation can contribute to common security, as can stable balances of power and defensive alliances.

Collective regional and global security structures are also needed. We affirm the original vision and mandate of collective security given to the United Nations and its Security Council. We encourage sober assessment of the successes and failures of international peacemaking efforts. We support, without illusions, efforts to make stronger and more effective the work of the United Nations and regional bodies in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

We understand that the United States' armed forces have a role in the structures of common security. This role requires the United States to maintain sufficient armed forces to participate effectively in common efforts to deter or defeat likely threats. Although this involvement entails a significant burden on our country, strengthening regional and global security structures is, in our judgment, in the long-term interests of the United States as well as other nations.

Give high priority to arms control and reduction. We particularly urge a sharp reduction in the number of weapons of mass destruction. We call for arms control agreements that are substantial, equitable, verifiable, and progressive.¹⁶ We support mutual confidence-building measures to improve mutually assured security. In particular, we give priority to:

- ◆ agreements among the leading nuclear powers to reduce their nuclear stockpiles and to decrease the possibility of nuclear confrontation or accident;
- ◆ the successful negotiation of a renewed Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the strengthening of mechanisms to monitor and enforce nuclear treaties, and efforts that move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons;
- ◆ treaties to ban the production, sale, and use of biological and chemical weapons; and
- ◆ agreements to ban the production, sale, and use of land mines.

Control and reduce the arms trade. Heavily armed nations continue to spend billions on arms. As one of the world's leading arms exporters, the

United States has special responsibility to reduce arms sales and to seek proper international control agreements over the worldwide sale and transfer of arms by the major exporters. We:

- ◆ support legislation to prohibit United States military assistance and arms transfers to governments that use them to oppress their own citizens or to engage in acts of aggression; and
- ◆ encourage international efforts to make arms sales open to public scrutiny and to reduce the arms trade.

Advocate participatory and accountable political structures within nations. In view of the high number of internal wars, the concern for political structures and processes within nations is crucial for peace. The success or failure of democratic efforts may have significant impact on international peace, since historically democracies have seldom declared war on each other. We expect governments to be accountable to law and people, provide for the participation of all and space for loyal opposition, protect individual and minority rights, and offer processes for conflicts to be resolved without war.

In support for just political structures, we:

- ◆ call for assistance to nations struggling to form democracies, recognizing that in many nations grinding poverty and population pressure are major obstacles to democracy;
- ◆ acknowledge that the responsible use of sanctions may on occasion be the most effective and least harmful measure to lead states to stop oppressing their people; and
- ◆ insist that one of the most important contributions the United States can make to peace is to have its own democracy work for a just and peaceful ordering of its diverse society.

Encourage non-governmental organizations and their work for peace. Freedom of association and activities of non-governmental local, national, and international organizations are indispensable to building peace today. These organizations counter the abuse of state power and mediate between individuals and organized centers of power. Through them, people expose serious human rights violations, respond to human need unmet by governments, organize people who are poor and oppressed, keep attention focused on the brutality of wars, and help resolve conflicts.

In support of non-governmental organizations, we:

- ◆ recognize and strive to further the role churches play as a worldwide network of communication in the defense of human rights;
- ◆ encourage people to become active supporters of one or more such non-governmental organizations;
- ◆ call upon nations to protect by law and nurture in their culture the freedom of their citizens to join together in voluntary association; and
- ◆ support the emerging forms of service in which teams of highly-trained volunteers seek peace through nonviolent intervention in conflicted and war-torn areas of the world.¹⁷

Encourage and support nonviolent action. In this century nonviolent movements have impressively shown their ability to protest violence and injustice and to bring change in situations of oppression.

We strongly support efforts to develop the potential of nonviolence to bring about just and peaceful change, and we:

- ◆ call for education on nonviolence in our church and elsewhere;
- ◆ encourage members of our church to give conscientious consideration to participation in nonviolent action in situations where it holds promise of being an appropriate and effective way to bring about greater justice, calling on them to appraise the situation with the principles of the just/unjust war tradition;¹⁸ and
- ◆ provide pastoral support for those who in conscience undertake nonviolent action for peace, including those who do so in symbolic ways to dramatize an evil and to witness to the power of the cross of Christ.

Care for the Uprooted. Tens of millions are refugees in foreign lands. At least as many are internally displaced. In unprecedented numbers people have had to flee their homes because of persecution or general violence.

We support compassionate survival assistance for refugees and vigorous international protection for them. The world community has a responsibility to aid nations that receive refugees and to help change the situations from which they have fled. In our own country, we support a generous

policy of welcome for refugees and immigrants. We pledge to continue our church's historic leadership in caring for refugees and immigrants.

“GO IN PEACE”

The elusive quest to build earthly peace is multifaceted, and for us belongs in a context that extends far beyond our own efforts and time. Our faith active for peace begins and ends with God, the *alpha* and *omega* of peace. Living still in a time when hate, injustice, war, and suffering seem often to have the upper hand, we call on God to fulfill the divine promise of final peace.

“Give God no rest” (Isaiah 62:6-7) until that day when “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together.... They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord” (Isaiah 65:25).

“Give God no rest” until that day when the nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4).

We await the fulfillment of God's promise of eternal peace, not in resignation, but in grateful joy and active hope, for our time and place are also God's. God, who makes earthly peace possible, calls us to gather in worship. Baptized into Christ, we hear the Gospel and share Holy Communion, the foretaste of the peaceful feast to come. The Holy Spirit sends us into our everyday communities to be agents for peace. We are called to pray, and to live, for peace in God's world.

We do the liturgy and we disperse, trusting that the peace of God in Christ Jesus, “which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), goes with us and prepares us to be peacemakers.

“Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.”

IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTIONS ENACTED BY THE 1995 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

Resolved:

1. To adopt “For Peace in God’s World” as a social statement of this church to be used in accordance with the understanding outlined in “Social Statements in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Principles and Procedures,” which was adopted at the 1989 Churchwide Assembly (CA89.3.14).
2. To call on members of this church to renew our prayer for peace, our identity as a community for peace, and our study of the scriptural witness to the God of Peace, using this statement to help them form their judgments and carry out their commitment to live a faith active for peace.
3. To call on our congregations and professional leaders to give renewed attention to how our liturgy, preaching, hymnody, and prayers embody God’s will for peace and our calling for peace.
4. To commend the education, service, and advocacy ministries of this church in their work for peace on our behalf; to direct churchwide units to review their programs and major program directions in light of this social statement with the intention of strengthening this church’s witness to global peace; and to call upon members to support these ministries.
5. To direct the Division for Church in Society, in cooperation with other units, particularly the Division for Congregational Ministries, to provide leadership, consultation, and educational and worship resources for congregations on the basis of this statement.
6. To call upon members to give generously to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its World Hunger Appeal, so that the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, and our partner ecumenical agencies might do more in helping to alleviate the causes and consequences of war, to resolve conflicts, and to build peace; and to call upon members to participate actively in these ministries.
7. To call upon the educational institutions of this church—day schools, colleges and universities, seminaries, centers of continuing education, and camps—to review their programs in light of this statement, so as to further the study of peace and global affairs.

8. To call upon the members and leaders of this church to support our youth in their struggle to define their identity and vocation as present and future peacemakers, and to call upon pastors and educators to encourage our youth to consider various forms of volunteer service that contribute to peace.

9. To share this social statement with other churches of the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, and our other ecumenical partners as a sign of our commitment to work together for peace with justice.

10. To send this social statement to the President of the United States, to our elected representatives in the United States Senate and House of Representatives, to the United States Secretary of State, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations as a sign of our commitment to work with them for a more peaceful world.

ENDNOTES

¹ The social statements on peace and global affairs from The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America are one sign of this legacy. We affirm and seek to build upon these statements: "Conscientious Objection" (LCA, 1968), "National Service and Selective Service Reform" (ALC, 1970), "World Community" (LCA, 1970), "Peace, Justice and Human Rights" (ALC, 1972), "Human Rights" (LCA, 1978), "Mandate for Peacemaking" (ALC, 1982), and "Peace and Politics" (LCA, 1984).

² Romans 15:33; 16:20; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:16; Hebrews 13:20.

³ Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:10-11; Romans 8:19-25; 1 Corinthians 15:23-25.

⁴ See the ELCA social statement, "The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," 1991, pages 5-8.

⁵ See the message on "Community Violence," adopted by the ELCA Church Council, April 1994.

⁶ "The Augsburg Confession," Article XVI. Note also its reference to Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than any human authority." Law and sword are meant to be God's servants to restrain evil and provide order (Romans 13:1-7). Nonetheless, political authority may itself become the embodiment of evil (Revelation 13).

⁷ For more on the just/unjust war teaching see, "Peace: God's Gift, Our Task" (ELCA 1993), pages 19-21, and 41-43. For congregational study, consult Joseph L. Allen, *War: A Primer for Christians-Crusade, Pacifism, Just War* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

⁸ "Peace and Politics," page 5; "Mandate for Peacemaking," pages 5 and 7.

⁹ “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America supports those of its members who conscientiously object to bearing arms in military service at any time, those who in conscience object to participation in a particular war or military activity (such as the refusal to use weapons of mass destruction in combat), and those who in conscience choose to participate in armed service.” (Resolution adopted by the Constituting Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1987.)

¹⁰ Martin Luther writes that all Christians should “put on” their neighbor, and so conduct themselves toward the neighbor as if they “were in the other’s place.” See “The Freedom of the Christian,” tr. by W.A. Lambert and revised by Harold J. Grimm, in *Luther’s Works*, 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), page 371.

¹¹ See the ELCA message on “Community Violence.”

¹² See the ELCA social statement, “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice,” 1993.

¹³ In 1993 the United States ranked last among 21 industrialized nations, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. See “10 Myths and Realities of Foreign Aid” (Washington, D.C.: Interaction, 1994).

¹⁴ See Dorothy V. Jones, *Code of Peace: Ethics and Security in the World of the Warlord States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁵ This includes strengthening United States’ support for the International Court of Justice. “For the sake of strengthened confidence in the evolving structures of international law and institutions, nations holding self-judging reservations to the Statute of the International Court of Justice by which they reserve the right to reject the Court’s jurisdiction should repeal these reservations.” See “World Community” (LCA social statement, 1970), page 2.

¹⁶ See “Peace and Politics” (LCA social statement, 1984), page 8.

¹⁷ For more on these forms of service, see Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND, *Seeds of Peace, Harvest for Life: Report on a Global Peace Service Consultation*, from an International Consultation at the Church Center for the United Nations, New York, N.Y., November 18-20, 1993 (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Abbey Press, 1994).

¹⁸ See the resolution, “Civil Disobedience,” adopted by the Constituting Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1987. Also, the social statement, “Human Law and the Conscience of Believers” (ALC, 1984).

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