



Social Statements

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

PEACE AND POLITICS

Adopted by the Twelfth Biennial Convention, Toronto, Ontario
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INTRODUCTION

Peace is the will of God. So the church confesses in every time and place, and so it prays: "For the peace from above, . . . for the peace of the whole world, . . . and for the unity of all . . ." Announcing the reign of God, the church awaits with eager longing the appearing of the kingdom when God will "bind heaven and earth in a single peace." As they look forward to Christ's coming again, Christians attend to their stewardship of God's creation — keeping, building, and making peace in the sinful world.

In the present nuclear age, we of the Lutheran Church in America seek to discern the shape and dimensions of the political work of peace in the light of that peace which is our gift in the gospel and our task as a church in society. We offer this statement as a framework for that discernment and action. By it we bear witness that the political work of peace in the world is preeminently God's work of creation and preservation; and by this statement we commit ourselves to the politics of peace.

This statement is presented in fulfillment of the mandate of the Eleventh Biennial Convention (1982). It stands in continuity with prior statements by this church, notably "Church and State: A Lutheran Perspective" (1966), "Conscientious Objection" (1968), "World Community" (1970), "Human Rights" (1978), and "Economic Justice" (1980). It carries forward the witness of the predecessor church bodies as set forth in convention resolutions and statements, most notably "The Problem of Nuclear Weapons" (United Lutheran Church in America, 1960).

THE OCCASION

The vital urgency of preventing nuclear war challenges the imagination and will of every nation to pursue the political work of peace. The possibility of a nuclear catastrophe and the extermination of the human family is a preoccupation of men and women everywhere. The devastation of a nuclear war would be both immediate and long-term. In the shadow of the nuclear peril, in a fragile and interdependent world, people are confronted as never before by the urgency of forging the political means to deal with international conflict in ways that are preventive of violence and productive of justice.

War has been regarded by politicians and strategists as one means of conducting international relations, as "politics by other means." As such, war has been seen as having limited objectives, as manageable, and as subject to rules generally agreed upon. Political rulers have considered armed might to be the essence of state power, and regarded external security in terms of the capacity to settle conflict through military victory.

The advent of total war overwhelmed these restraints and limits. The two world wars were waged for unconditional ends and by largely unlimited means. The revulsion at the indiscriminate carnage of these wars moved world opinion to demand not the legal restraint but the outlawing of aggressive war as a crime against humanity.

Since the beginning of the nuclear age a profound transformation has been taking place in the understanding and practice of politics among nations. Considered to be politically meaningless, as well as morally unthinkable, nuclear war is widely rejected because it is a crime against humanity. Furthermore, policies based on the notion of nuclear superiority with first strike capability are seen as inherently destabilizing.

For all these reasons, weapons of nuclear war are generally deemed to be means not of waging but of preventing, a war the deadly effects of which could be total and permanent. It is the political use of nuclear weapons through possession, not the military use through war-fighting, that has thus far informed the policies of the nuclear powers. Yet the deterrent use of nuclear weapons may be endangered by the development of smaller weapons of more limited destructive capacity or the prospect of an arms race in outer space. It is widely feared that the capacity for "limited" nuclear war-fighting may seriously weaken the will to prevent nuclear war. Thus the structure of nuclear deterrence is changing, affected by both political and technological developments. It is the unpredictability of these developments that is leading many to call for strategies that will lessen the risk of war, and policies that will broaden the areas of common interest between the nuclear superpowers. Negotiated arms control and reduction, seeking a stable deterrence at the lowest possible level of risk are principles regarded by many in the strategic community as vital to keeping the peace. An unchecked arms race is widely rejected as a reckless imperilment of the human community.

Yet the keeping and building of peace is more than a matter between the United States and the Soviet Union. There is as yet no effective will to halt, or even control, the worldwide proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the international traffic in conventional arms is fueled by an expanding demand and the eagerness of supplying countries to earn foreign credits. The result is an increasingly dangerous world in which unstable regimes and terrorist groups possess a destructive potential beyond the control of the two principal nuclear antagonists.

At this time people everywhere are confronted by a profound challenge: to fashion a security which will ensure and policies which will guarantee the survival of the human family and the possibility of a life that is both safe and just. Thus, peace must be both kept and built. This crowded and dangerous world must discover nonviolent ways both of managing and of moving beyond the many deeply rooted antagonisms which divide peoples and states. Christians, who know the peace and security of life in Jesus Christ, are called by God to participate fully in this perilous but necessary quest.

THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS

Peace: The Promise of God

We confess, teach, and proclaim that God created and still preserves the world for peace with God and with itself. Made in the image of God, people are to live not in isolation and enmity but in co-humanity with one another. In this gift, all people have the task of exercising living dominion over the earth in a life of thanksgiving, praise, service, and obedience to their Lord. God's peace in creation was the condition of wholeness and harmony in which God first beheld the world and saw that it was good (Gen. 1:31), when all creation worshiped God. The peace of God's reign, infinitely surpassing the peace of creation, is the *shalom* of Christ's triumph over the present age, the Sabbath-rest of the people of God (Heb. 4:9-10).

In the present fallen world, the Holy Spirit creates the community of persons reconciled in Christ to be a witness both to the peace of God's creation and to God's

promise to the world of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. As members of that community, we celebrate in hope the peace of God's reconciliation; the peace of the knowledge of God (Isa. 11:9); of vindication of God's people (Mic. 4:6-8); of harmony among all creatures (Isa. 11:6-9); in which nations will study war no longer (Mic. 4:1-3; Isa. 2:2-4); in which harassment and molestation will cease (Mic. 4:4). It is a peace in which God will remove all sorrow and suffering (Rev. 21:3-4). It is the peace of the reign of God, announced in word and deed by Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 6:20-23; 7:22) and proclaimed by the apostles (Luke 10:8-9; Acts 19:8; 20:25). It is the peace with God given by Christ to the believing fellowship (John 14:27), lovingly shared by Christians one with another (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 16:16), and experienced by the faithful amid this sinful age in anticipation of the day of Christ's final triumph (1 Cor. 15: 18-26).

Peace with God is the present possession of those who have been justified by faith in Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:1), the result of God's reconciling grace in Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-19). Inasmuch as faith and promise belong together (Rom. 4), in Christ God and the rebellious enemies of God are reconciled. They are reunited by Christ's death and victory (Rom. 5:10). In overcoming enmity between God and humankind, Christ's atonement overcomes enmity among peoples, making peace by the blood of Christ's cross (Col. 1:20); thereby uniting them in one new people, the Church (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:14-16).

In every age the daughters and sons of God in Jesus Christ have seen peacemaking through the love of enemies (Matt. 5:44) as the fruit of faith, the task to which they are divinely called and in which they are declared blessed (Matt. 5:9). Reconciled to God through Christ, they are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19), the proclamation of God's peace to all people (Luke 2:10-14).

Peace with God is a gift that is not of this world (John 14:27), which the world can neither give nor take away. Yet those to whom it is given are sent into the world (John 20:21; Matt. 28:19-20), not removed from it (John 17:5). Christians see in the struggle and suffering of the present world a deep yearning for the consummation of God's reconciling peace (Rom. 8:18-25). Subjected in hope to this convulsion and pain, the world is the place of God's work. We look confidently for the coming of God's reign and the victory of God's reconciliation.

Sin: The Root of War

War is evidence of the disorder of sin which infects the human family. While the external causes of war (including aggression, economic exploitation, racial and national pride, the ambition of rulers, and the desire for revenge) are many and complex, the root of war is sin — the willful rejection of God's lordship and worship of the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:28-32). Because of this rebellion, all of creation is disordered, at war with itself, and humans are pitted against each other. God's question to the disobedient Adam, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9), and God's question to the murderous Cain, "Where is your brother?" (Gen. 4:9), together are addressed to every generation of humankind, for in sin we have become strangers to one another.

Strangement and enmity among persons and nations are nurtured by fear. Having claimed for itself a privileged position, a nation or group lives in fear of those whom it has suppressed or excluded. Racists fear those whom they have declared inferior; exploiters fear their victims; nationalists fear national enemies; totalitarian rulers fear the free; and religious fanatics fear heretics and infidels. Moreover, the weak and victimized fear the strong. Fear often breeds hatred, and hatred, violent aggression.

Christian faith declares that aggression and its consequence, vengeance, are violations of the will of God. Often draped in a mantle of moral or religious right, they are

the deadly expression of the sinful lust for domination and the compulsion to self-justification. Aggression may involve the violation of the commands against both murder and theft; and vengeance compounds both. So Scripture declares vengeance as being reserved to God alone (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19), and enjoins the limitation of punishment for injustice (Gen. 4:14-15; Exod. 21:24). The church views war as a catastrophic consequence of sin against which God summons us all to strive. In the face of "rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6), the church calls for repentance by the nations and makes intercession for them all.

The Creator's Presence in the Political Work of Peace

The human longing to build peace is evidence that the Creator has not abandoned the creation. It is because humans sense the absence of peace that they can decry the evil of war. It is because they sense the absence of order that they can deplore disorder. It is because they know, however dimly, what justice is that they can become outraged by injustice. The divine law is written upon their hearts, and their consciences testify to God's creative "yes" (Rom. 2:15).

God's "yes" in creation is thus not swallowed up in the chaos and violence of sin. Rather, it remains in the form of God's loving preservation of humankind (Gen. 3:21; Hos. 11:8-9) and God's advocacy on behalf of the poor and the weak (Ps. 10:17-18; 68:5; Isa. 1:17). God cares for the helpless by means of good officebearers (Ps. 72:1-14), and holds the unruly and oppressive powers accountable for their oppressive acts (Ps. 82:1-3).

The human capacity for politics is further evidence of the "yes" of God's creating and preserving love. In political work, humans participate in the work of God in the restraint of aggression, the resolution of disputes, and the establishment of justice. Politics is the task of protecting and caring for the common life. Thus peace is the basis, sense, and goal of politics. The Creator is present in the politics of peace.

Whereas peace with God in Christ is the priceless gift of the reign of God, temporal peace is the work of God's preservation, a task which all are commanded to undertake. Temporal peace, the work of politics, is a task which Christians honor and to which they are especially summoned. It is in the political realm that Christians are privileged to employ their reason in service to God and neighbor (Rom. 12:1-2; 13:7). It is in the performance of political obligation that Christians exercise their freedom, a freedom from all obligation except to love the neighbor (Rom. 13:8).

An eminently social task, the politics of peace is conducted through institutions and by individuals. Civil authority and the institutions of government are principal means of God's preserving love (Rom. 13:2-3). God intends the officials and institutions of government to be both protective and productive, preventing and penalizing lawlessness (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14) and advancing human welfare (*Large Catechism*, 150). The church declares that all holders of civil office are accountable to God for their public stewardship.

The nonviolent management and resolution of conflict are the essence of politics and the work of just government. Resort to violence signals a failure of politics. Under such conditions, force should be used only to restore the conditions necessary for politics. Such force is to be wielded by the legitimate authority (Rom. 13:4; Matt. 26:52), lawfully and with restraint (Luke 3:14).

The legitimate use of deadly force stands under God's command of love for the weak in the deterrence of aggression, and love for the enemy in the case of hostilities. The discernment of love in such cases is filled with ambiguities, and requires the full participation of the citizenry in critical reflection and moral discourse.

The lawful possessors of the means of deadly force are often tempted to employ them in ways which by virtue of being premature, disproportionate, or indiscriminate are unjustifiable. To be justifiable, the application of military force must be undertaken as a last resort and only by legally constituted authority; and it must be waged in a way that is proportionate to the wickedness to be resisted and respectful of the noncombatant civilian. A Christian may evaluate any war in terms such as these, and must decide conscientiously whether his or her participation is ethically justifiable (*Augsburg Confession* XVI). We recognize the profound ambiguities which members of the armed forces often face in this regard, and support them in the conscientious exercise of their office.

Political societies are frequently tempted to perceive their security primarily in terms of military might, rather than conceiving of it as grounded in the politics of peace. Reliance on arms alone can create a dangerous insecurity. Security is ultimately the work of politics.

The Church's Proclamation

The mission of the church, the proclamation of the Word of God, contributes to the politics of peace by declaring that all are equally sinful before God and, therefore, that no nation enjoys a special righteousness or possesses the divine authority to rule over others; that human accountability is ultimately to God alone; and that earthly power itself stands responsible to God under justice.

The gospel declares to all that in Christ the enmity between God and humankind has been overcome, and that the new creation is the destiny God offers to all nations. It is the power of God's reconciliation in Christ that propels Christians into the world to make peace between enemies. They join in the political stewardship to which all are called as the expression of their hope in Christ Jesus, bringing as their specific insight the love of enemies.

As the community of forgiven sinners, the church provides a context for moral and political discourse in the civil community so that all may be equipped for responsible action in the world for the sake of many neighbors. Our theology of the cross of Christ forbids illusions regarding the possibility of establishing permanent peace and a perfect society in this age. Confident, however, in God's promise of peace, the church proclaims this hope so that all may persist in the politics of peace, trusting in the loving Creator's presence, and looking forward to the unveiled reign of God.

Although we have no special authority as a church to advocate particular policies as if they were divinely sanctioned, our political stewardship, individually as citizens and corporately as a church in society, obligates us to contribute to the ongoing debate on matters that affect the survival and well-being of the human family and all creation. This we must do both boldly and modestly — boldly, in the freedom for which Christ has set us free; modestly, in view of our sin, limited vision, and the ever-changing character of the world.

JUDGMENTS AND TASKS

We declare it to be our conviction that, while conflicts and violence are abiding features of this sinful world, war is not inevitable, is not to be sought, and is never to be blessed as a means of resolving disputes. While the weak must still be defended with power backed by might, and while nations may unhappily be forced to respond to aggression by limited military means, yet the normal use of force must be its political use through military non-use.

We declare without equivocation that nuclear war, with its catastrophic devastation of the earth, is contrary to the good and gracious will of God for the creation.

Accordingly, we condemn the notion of "winning" a nuclear war, and any military policies or rhetoric which may be predicated on it. We judge nuclear policies of either superpower intended to achieve the capacity for a disarming "first strike" to be inherently destabilizing and evil. An actual first strike would be the most inhuman form of aggression imaginable. A retaliatory strike solely for the purpose of revenge would be no less outside the limits of common morality.

We reject as imprudent and dangerous, policies designed to achieve nuclear superiority. An unchecked arms race is as "unwinnable" as nuclear war itself. It is dangerous folly to imagine that one of the superpowers could prevail by impoverishing or terrorizing the other. Only a balance at the lowest level of risk, not attempted blackmail through nuclear superiority, can facilitate mutual security.

We denounce as evil and as a form of aggressive violence any attempt to destroy a political adversary through destabilization. Such destabilization would be both disproportionate and indiscriminate in its human damage.

We reject the notion that the conflict between the nuclear superpowers is an apocalyptic struggle between absolute Good and absolute Evil. While there are profound differences between the political values of the Western and Eastern systems of government, and while honest comparative moral evaluation of the character and behavior of political regimes is called for, to absolutize these historical differences is theologically heretical and politically irresponsible. Such prideful absolutizing invites policies of total war unrestrained by morality or prudence.

We reject the notion of national messianism in which a particular nation-state proudly declares it to be its historic calling to "save" the world from political, social, or religious "error," making the world over into its own likeness.

We reject the illusion that any nation can isolate itself behind walls of military might and economic protectionism. Notions of security and well-being founded upon political and economic isolation are incompatible with the reality of global interdependence, and foster suspicion and hatred among nations.

We likewise condemn the misappropriation of valuable resources by any nations of the world to an escalating arms race that impairs our financial ability to foster economic and political justice at home and abroad. We affirm that there is no national security without global security. And there can be no global security without serious progress against poverty and economic injustice. Justice and security go hand in hand; without one, the other cannot long endure.

While it is doubtless unavoidable that the East-West rivalry will reverberate in the politics of the third world, we deplore the violence which that rivalry has exacerbated and prolonged. The superpowers' frequent manipulation of regional conflict and their support of ruthless, tyrannous regimes in their respective spheres of influence stand in painful contrast to the good they could be doing to alleviate misery and promote human development.

We deplore the worldwide traffic in arms, the expanding demand for sophisticated weapons in the third world, and the eagerness to supply it by many industrialized countries. We are especially alarmed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The unchecked continuation of weapons trafficking can only further endanger the entire world community. As this church said in 1970:

It is of vital importance that all nations give sustained attention to the inappropriateness of massive arms as a means of maintaining national security, a critical appraisal of their arsenals in the light of such considerations, and a restudy of national needs and goals with a view toward the reallocation of resources for peaceful purposes.
(World Community)

Directions of Policy: Peacekeeping

It is an outrage that under present conditions, in order to exist together, the United States and the Soviet Union, with their allies, must confront each other with the possibility of mass slaughter. Yet that is precisely the situation of the two superpowers today. We hold, therefore, that nuclear deterrence involves us all in a sinful situation from which none are exempt.

For deterrence to succeed in preventing the catastrophe of nuclear war, there must be a credible threat to use nuclear weapons in retaliation for aggression. It is the conviction of this statement that such actual use of nuclear weapons would, even in retaliation, constitute mass murder. What it would be wrong actually to do, it is also wrong to intend or threaten. Yet insofar as aggression (one's own as well as the other's) is restrained by the possession of nuclear weapons (which includes the threat to use them in retaliation), nuclear deterrence remains at the present time as the lesser of evils. Yet evil it is and remains.

Therefore, we call upon the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union with their allies to forge more stable and less evil means to assure peace and security in the world. While they work toward such a time, the possession of nuclear weapons solely for the purpose of deterrence may be judged as tolerable yet appalling; however, deterrence as a permanent policy is not acceptable. In the interim, distress at this sinful situation in the face of God's will for peace should motivate all in the United States and the Soviet Union to persevere in pursuit of alternative strategies for peacekeeping and common security. As was affirmed in 1970:

It is clearly time for a rethinking of the meaning of national security. In view of the overkill capacity now possessed by the super-powers, national security can no longer be defined in terms of either nuclear superiority or even nuclear stalemate. The common threat which such weapons hold for all humanity teaches that their continued development can only undermine security. It is now necessary to create an international legal framework within which arms control can be brought about and to help nations perceive that their safety must be conceived in more than military terms.

A beginning has been made in the construction of the necessary legal framework. This effort should be intensified, should become increasingly multinational in character, and should include all weapons of mass destruction. In the meantime, the United States should be encouraged to undertake such unilateral initiatives as may contribute to a climate more hospitable to the limitation of arms. (World Community)

We recognize that the East-West rivalry, while subject to change, will be a principal feature of international politics for an indefinite time to come. We therefore encourage the nurturing of an East-West relationship which excludes the notion of "win-lose," seeking instead to find increasing areas of common interest and endeavor, and to discover fields other than the military for competition which would be of benefit to the entire world community.

It is of vital importance for the near future that nuclear deterrence be stabilized at the lowest possible level of risk. Such stabilization requires the political recognition by both parties of the reciprocity of the deterrence situation. Reciprocity means that what is to be deterred is not only the other's capacity for aggression, but also one's own. Each side must restrain its own capacity for aggression to the satisfaction of the other. This requires evaluation of proposed technological advances to determine whether they enhance or diminish stability. On this basis, the negotiation of mechanisms of deterrence which are stable and keep the peace is conceivable, forming the basis for mutually assured security.

We encourage the steadfast pursuit of arms control and arms reduction agreements

between the nuclear superpowers, especially agreements which forestall the shifting of the arms race to destabilizing new technologies and areas, such as outer space.

We call for arms control agreements that are substantial, equitable, verifiable, and progressive. Such agreements should provide for an increasing mutual "transparency" of the military policies and actions of the superpowers by means of the regular exchange of information and ongoing consultation. We regard such provisions for mutual confidence-building to be necessary to progress toward mutually assured security between the nuclear superpowers.

We call for a multilateral verifiable freeze on the testing, production, stockpiling and deployment of nuclear weapons systems as a step toward the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. We urge the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union to take steps in the search for greater trust and understanding among nations.

Recognizing that a regional conflict could become a factor precipitating direct hostilities between nuclear superpowers, we call upon the United States and the Soviet Union to institute regular consultative procedures for the joint assessment of potential or actual regional conflicts where the two powers may have overlapping and/or conflicting interests; to develop an early warning system for the prediction of violence; and to develop emergency procedures for the restraint and containment of hostilities and the expeditious, nonviolent resolution of disputes.

Peacekeeping is the prevention of war. It involves preventing, moderating and resolving conflict. Peacekeeping further requires peacebuilding, the political production of conditions in which nations and people are assured a common future of security in a world of conflict and uncertainty. Peacekeeping is minimally based upon mutual threat; but mutual threat alone is hardly sufficient as the means of peacekeeping over the long run. The understanding of East-West nuclear relations in terms of mutually assured destruction must be replaced by that of mutually assured security.

Directions of Policy: Peacebuilding

Peacekeeping must be seen in the context of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding as a political task refers to the wide range of positive measures nations and peoples may take to expand common interests, facilitate cooperation, generate mutual amity and goodwill, and create a community which transcends geographic borders and national differences. Peacebuilding aims at the establishment of the conditions of justice among people which, in turn, minimize hostility and the likelihood of violent conflict.

Peacebuilding is a constructive enterprise having many aspects. It involves negotiations between nations. A vital role is played, in this context, by nations such as Canada in offering their good offices for the mediation of conflict and the pursuit of peace. It also involves the willingness of nations to permit increasing opportunity for such nongovernmental contacts as cultural and humanitarian exchange, trade, and international travel. It presupposes a sufficient degree of security to permit space and freedom for the development of a variety of common interests not directly related to international politics. Such links, in turn, may contribute to an atmosphere favorable to further constructive policies and actions on the part of governments.

Peacebuilding also involves a growing commitment by governments to the support of international institutions and of world law. It is time for the members of the world community, and the nuclear superpowers in particular, to renew their commitment to support and work through international institutions for both the peaceful settlement of disputes and the advancement of human well-being. In addition, the international standards of human rights, to which most nations have subscribed, should be viewed as a challenge to common humanitarian endeavor, and not as weapons to be used in polemical rhetoric.

Regional consultative arrangements which bring together security, economic cooperation, and humanitarian concerns should be encouraged. Such arrangements could facilitate movement from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

Human rights and economic justice are inextricable parts of peacebuilding and global security. Notwithstanding the predominance of the East-West bipolarity, both peacekeeping and peacebuilding should be seen increasingly as concerns of the entire world community, to be dealt with multinationally, through effective institutions. Global security and welfare, while distinct, are inseparable concerns in which all the world's people have a direct stake. The nuclear superpowers are morally accountable to the entire family of nations for their leadership in the keeping, and building, of world peace.

Citizens everywhere have a responsibility to participate actively in the keeping and building of peace. They are called, by virtue of their God-given humanity, to care for creation and for the whole human community, beginning with their immediate family, neighborhood, and workplace. Peacebuilding requires both the acquisition of knowledge about human affairs and the commitment to the civil, nonviolent, and constructive resolution of human conflict. We in North America must remind ourselves that the security of our cherished institutions of political democracy is not alone a matter of military might, but even more a matter of our willingness to participate in their working effectively for the sake of human justice. Political democracies must demonstrate their commitment to freedom and social justice in both their domestic and their international policies.

Peacemaking: The Vocation of Christians

For the Christian, peacemaking is the love of enemies and the reconciliation of the estranged. Christians are called both to testify to the active presence of God in the political work of peace, and to participate in the task of peace. Gifted with the promise of God's reconciling peace, Christians are empowered to join in the work of temporal peace in the present world of sin, conflict, and constant change. They are called to affirm the temporal ends of politics and government, and to perform political work as an expression of the hope that is in them, especially when fear and despair threaten to paralyze the human community.

As members of the ecumenical community of faith, transcending time, place, nationality and culture, Christians are challenged to bring to political work a perspective not limited to narrow self-interest. They are challenged to assist the civil community to perceive its security and well-being as interwoven with the security of all people everywhere. As people who understand themselves to be stewards of God's gifts, Christians are challenged to teach, by word and deed, that the gifts of life in community are a trust to be cared for and handed on to succeeding generations.

Christians, along with the rest of the civil community, are to participate constructively and critically in the ongoing work of the politics of peace. They claim no superior knowledge and no zone of purity for themselves. Rather, they bring to the common task of peace the love of enemies that is their gift in Christ. They are thus free, as forgiven sinners, to embrace the moral ambiguity of political life and, relying on Christ alone, to exercise their baptismal vocation in the world for the neighbor's sake — even the neighbor who is an enemy. Empowered by the love of God in Christ, the works of Christian love are not determined in conformity to a prescribed ideal, but are shaped by the neighbor's actual needs.

The Word of God requires of us such self-examination that we envision the possibility of selective conscientious objection to specific policies. This church is respectful and supportive of such witness on the part of those who act in conscience and courage.

This church stands by and upholds those of its members who conscientiously object to military service as well as those who in conscience choose to serve in the military. This church further affirms that the individual who, for reasons of conscience, objects to participation in a particular war is acting in harmony with Lutheran teaching. (Conscientious Objection, 1968)

Both the Word of God and ecumenical sensitivity demand that we recognize and respect the tradition of those Christians who call for a radically different approach to discipleship. We honor those who in obedience to Christ's command renounce all violence and commit themselves to the way of the cross as the only path leading toward reconciliation and peace. We gratefully acknowledge our need for counsel and dialogue with those who pursue this alternative approach to peacemaking.

No one is exempt from civil and political obligation or from critical participation in the process of policymaking, whether as citizen or officeholder. All have a stake in, and a responsibility for, policies that advance peace; and all share the burden of guilt for the failure of the politics of peace. All are obligated to function as morally self-critical participants in the political society and its institutions; and all are responsible for contributing a self-critical dimension to the functioning of the institutions themselves.

All Christians are required to examine their actions conscientiously in light of their obligation to be peacemakers and their responsibilities to their neighbors. In a sinful world, when order, justice and peace are threatened by aggression, Christians may bear the civil sword to protect their neighbors and to restore peace. Even so, love for the aggressor or enemy requires that lethal force be used in a way proportional to the evil being resisted, and respecting the life of the innocent. In matters of war and peace, as in all of life, a Christian's ultimate loyalty and obedience is to God (Acts 5:29; *The Augsburg Confession*, XVI).

As a member of the worldwide Christian community, this church is challenged to take its part in facilitating communication among peoples of diverse cultures and political systems as the one people redeemed in Jesus Christ. In so doing, we are challenged to join in bearing witness to the One God whose ways begin and end in peace. Together with Christians throughout the world, we are a single living witness to the oneness of God's people and the unity which God intends for the human family.

CONCLUSION

God's loving "yes" in the creation and preservation of the world, in the cross and victory of Christ, and in the final victory of God over the powers of this age, is the substance of our present confidence and future hope. In praying "Thy kingdom come," we look forward joyfully to the coming of God's reign, and perform the works of hope and faithfulness. We take our place in the world which God loves, bearing witness to the Light which no darkness can overcome. We see in the worldwide longing for peace and justice evidence that God has not abandoned this world to the Evil One; and we therefore gladly join with all people of goodwill in the politics of peace.

This we do as redeemed sinners for whom, while we were yet God's enemies, Christ died. By the Spirit's empowerment we take up the ongoing political work of loving and reconciling enemies, making peace as becomes the blessed children of God.

ENABLING RESOLUTIONS

Resolved:

1. That the document "Peace and Politics" be adopted as an official social statement of the Lutheran Church in America.

2. That in adopting this document as an official social statement, the Lutheran Church in America expresses the grave urgency with which it regards the issue of world peace, and uplifts this as a topic of churchwide emphasis. To that end, this church emphasizes the understanding of the church as all the baptized people of God and enjoins all its members, laity and clergy, to become active in efforts to strengthen world peace and, in cooperation with others of goodwill, to seek even greater understanding of related issues and the expansion of efforts for peace;
3. That, continuing the call of the Eleventh Biennial Convention's resolution on peace and war, this convention calls upon the ordained ministers and congregations of this church to engage in extensive study of peace and war, using this social statement as a framework.
It calls upon ordained ministers of this church to regularly
 - a. preach and teach upon the duty of government to secure human well-being in community, and upon the Christian's special freedom and responsibility to exercise our life in Christ with God through political involvement for the good of the neighbor.
 - b. preach and teach upon the peril of public idolatry, such as that which justifies one's own sin by seeing only the sin of another.
 - c. preach and teach, as occasion warrants, upon the special peril into which, we confess, we all too often have fallen through a proud overreliance upon military might and technological prowess, at the expense of constructive policies for the securing of human rights and economic justice.
4. That this convention calls upon every member of the Lutheran Church in America to join with all Christians in taking up political responsibility as their faith and conscience demand; and to work faithfully, with all persons of goodwill, as God has been faithful to us in Christ, for the securement of human well-being on earth. Specifically, we are called to
 - a. examine how we personally deal with conflict and seek alternatives to manage conflict constructively.
 - b. work to build peace and understanding at home, school, church, and work.
 - c. learn the process by which our local, state/provincial, and federal governments operate and how we can participate in decision-making.
 - d. work with political parties and non-partisan groups in order to contribute effectively to the political process.
 - e. exercise our right and fulfill our obligation to vote in elections at all levels of government.
 - f. study the values and traditions of people of other cultures in the global village.
 - g. address these and related concerns in the spirit of confession, penitence, and prayer.
5. That this convention calls upon congregations, institutions, and agencies of this church to sponsor for their communities free and reasoned discussion on that which makes for peace and justice, availing themselves especially of the resources in churchwide agency staff, church-related seminaries and colleges, synodical staff, and of persons whose occupations involve them daily in such concerns.
6. That this convention directs the churchwide program agencies and offices to develop programs appropriate to their several mandates in the bylaws of this church. These programs should be devised to equip the ordained ministers and congregations to understand and apply the theological orientation and principles informing the social statement. Such programs should include

- a. seminary and college courses.
 - b. continuing education for pastors, including counseling on the issues involved in this statement.
 - c. study conferences for parish leaders.
 - d. programs designed specifically to assist youth to grapple with these issues so that they might be enabled in their vocation as peacemakers.
 - e. provision of opportunities for individuals to communicate with appropriate government agencies.
 - f. opportunities for exchange and travel whereby individuals and congregations may learn more of different cultures, political systems, and national perspectives.
 - g. church school curricula.
7. That this convention encourages the Canadian members of this church to continue to explore their unique possibilities to mediate among nations, promote peace, and initiate steps leading to deeper understanding and better relations among nations and peoples in conflict.
 8. That the Division for Mission in North America continue the work of theological study, issue clarification, and policy assessment begun in the preparation of this statement.
 9. That the Division for Mission in North America, in conjunction with the Office for Governmental Affairs of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., advocate policies and actions as described in this statement, to agencies and officials of the United States government. This social statement shall be used as the basis and framework of such communications and advocacy. Similar advocacy efforts shall be made, through appropriate church channels, with governmental agencies and officials of Canada. Members of congregations of this church should participate in these continuing efforts.
 10. That this social statement be sent to the heads of the world nuclear powers as the position of the Lutheran Church in America, as well as to the heads of Christian communions within those nations. It shall be accompanied by a communication from the bishop of this church urging concerted efforts to effect regional and international relationships, such as outlined in the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which would strengthen security for all, establish humanitarian concerns as a chief priority, and engender economic cooperation as a basis for comprehensive and stable relationships among nations, respectful of national concerns and individual freedoms.
 11. That appropriate churchwide agencies and offices, especially the Division for Mission in North America, the Division for World Mission and Ecumenism, and the Office of the Bishop, be directed to initiate efforts leading to strengthened and common commitment with other Christian communions of the world in the unceasing work for peace with justice. These efforts should be marked by frequent consultation and communication, open and searching dialogue, and common commitment and activities related to the peacemaking role to which all Christians are called. These efforts will recognize a mutual accountability which is demanded of those churches and individuals who respond to the call to work for peace.