

MANDATE FOR PEACEMAKING



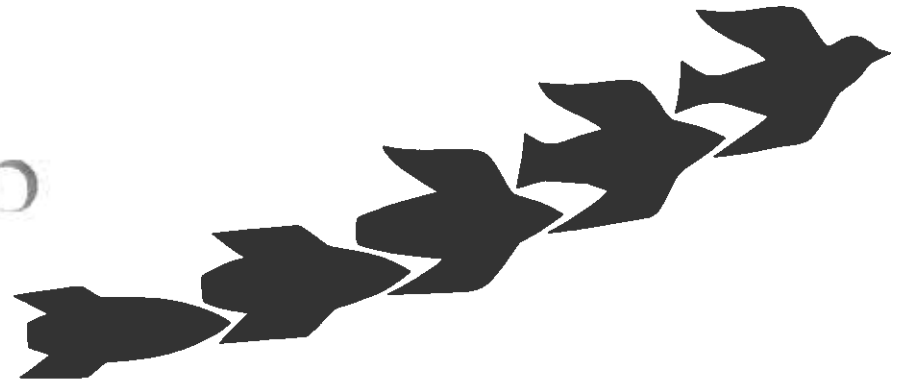
a statement of
The American Lutheran Church

A statement adopted Sept. 10, 1982, by the Eleventh General Convention of The American Lutheran Church (GC82.10.106): Section A "as a statement of judgment and conviction, expressing the corporate conviction of this church on the issue of peacemaking, as its contribution to the public debate on this issue," and Section B, "as a statement of policy and practice" of The American Lutheran Church. Ballot vote tally for Section A: Yes 861; No 33. Ballot vote tally for Section B: Yes 843; No 48.

A. AFFIRMATIONS

1. The gospel proclaims reconciliation between God and rebellious humanity, leading to peace among all God's creatures. While mindful that we continue to be part of a fallen, sinful world, we have confidence in the redemptive activity of our God, whose will and work includes peace for all humanity. The kingdom of God is a peaceable kingdom, as the vision of it in both Old and New Testaments expresses.
2. The earthly ministry of our incarnate Lord exemplifies for us the humblest aspects of peacemaking, which are also the most compelling signs

Design by Ric Hartman,
art teacher at Elkhorn (Wisconsin)
Area High School, won first prize
in U.S. competition of poster
contest for UN 1982 Special Session
on Disarmament, received honorable
mention in international judging.
Ric, an ALC member, offered the
design to his church and it is
the visual symbol for the ALC
peacemaking emphasis.



of God's kingdom: that all are included who seek to be, that all eat and drink together at one table. The cross of our Lord is the culminating point of the kingdom and the place of utter reconciliation, where a new humanity is created (Eph. 2:12-17) and the false pride and pretenses of the old humanity are demolished. We are called to live as a part of that new humanity, empowered by Pentecost's inclusive Spirit, in a ministry of reconciliation, a vocation of peacemaking.

3. Begun in oneness by the Holy Spirit, the church is a community that transcends national, political, and economic-class boundaries. As a human community it suffers from the same divisions and barriers as does the rest of humanity. Although its brokenness is reflective of humanity's brokenness, nevertheless the church is still the "earthen vessel" (2 Cor. 4:7) in which the work of the kingdom is invested. This work of the kingdom includes the task of upholding the oneness of humanity and resisting false values and securities.

4. Because we are not unblemished healers but a community of sinners, we can understand the fears and pride which infest humanity, heightening mistrust and promoting attempts to control human destiny through weapons and threats of war. As knowing recipients of God's love and grace, we glimpse the promise of our crucified and risen Lord: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). In accepting the mandate for peacemaking, we can say with the psalmist: "Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security . . . for there is posterity for the man of peace" (Ps. 37:3, 37).

5. We confess that we have only fitfully responded to the reconciliation offered by the cross, and that we have used the freedom of grace to pur-

sue our own attempts to control human destiny, particularly by advancing the technology of modern warfare. We confess that we have too often succumbed to a feeling of helplessness concerning wars, threats of wars, and the incessant making of tools for wars. We confess that our sense of helplessness has numbed us too often into silence about the politics of peace and war. We confess that we have unbiblically limited the parameters of peacemaking to peace between God and humanity or peace among persons in primary relationships. We confess that we have not made essential, to our theology or our ministry, the tasks of peacemaking among nations, curbing the arms race, and establishment of international justice.

6. As believers, we know that our only ultimate security is in God. "You alone, O Lord, keep me perfectly safe" (Ps. 4:8). Such faith does not lead us to neglect or deny the legitimate security interests of the nations. Rather, such faith frees us to see such security interests in their proper perspective. Our faith in the ultimate security which only God gives is our source of energy and hope for seeking earthly peace, here and now. Thus, the security which all human beings desire we also seek, as part of the *shalom* (peace with justice) which God promises for all.

7. We are distressed by the increasing sense of insecurity and peril to which our world is being led by escalation in nuclear weaponry. We know that nuclear technology makes possible, even through miscalculation, the annihilation of humankind. We see that our nation is locked with the Soviet Union in an arms race which both countries find almost impossible to stop. We reject the argument that we must maintain a capacity to destroy enemy targets many times over and view such an overkill mentality as thwarting any progress toward arms reduction by either side.

8. There is *no* national security without global security. And there can be no global security without serious progress against poverty and economic injustice. We know the impact which the massive use of the planet's resources for armaments has on the lives of those who are hungry and oppressed. We believe the Creator intended that such scarce resources be used to feed, clothe, educate, and bring health to human beings. Diverting them from such life-sustaining uses intensifies economic injustice and invites divine judgment upon our foolish stewardship of the creation. Thus, "national security" must not be invoked to stifle discussion of issues related to the arms race. National security includes far more than military preparedness. We concur with the U.S. Presidential Commission on World Hunger, which said in 1980:

. . . [P]romoting economic development in general, and overcoming hunger in particular, are tasks far more critical to the U.S. national security than most policy-makers acknowledge or even believe. Since the advent of nuclear weapons most Americans have been conditioned to equate national security with the strength of strategic military forces. The Commission considers this prevailing belief to be a simplistic illusion. Armed might represents merely the physical aspect of national security. Military force is ultimately useless in the absence of the global security that only coordinated international progress toward social justice can bring.

9. Lutherans historically, as part of the just/unjust war tradition (*Augsburg Confession*, Article 16), have followed an ethical framework which seeks to restrain both the entry into and the conduct of warfare. It does not justify war or preparations for war as such, but sees military activity under certain circumstances as a necessary evil, to be undertaken lest a greater evil be perpetuated. The just/unjust war ethic has seldom stopped nations from going to war. But it has strongly influenced the international laws governing the conduct of warfare, such as treatment of non-combatants (civilians, prisoners) and the outlawing of certain types of weapons. The just/unjust war ethic does not excuse believers from the rigor of ethical thinking and decision-making on war and peace. Just-war thinking explicitly rules out the option of unthinking compliance with whatever policies a nation's political and military leadership happens to be offering the people at a given time.*

* For a more complete treatment of the just/unjust war criteria, see "The Witness of U.S. Lutherans on Peace, War, and Conscience," Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., 1974.

10. Many of us on the basis of the traditional just/unjust war ethic believe that any use of *nuclear* weapons is unjustifiable, a position usually known as "nuclear pacifism." Others of us approach all questions of peace and arms from a position of traditional pacifism, believing that the use of armed force of any kind can never be justified. We are brought to that position by our biblical understanding and in recognition that pacifism was a dominant tradition among early Christians. From either pacifism or the just/unjust war ethic, we share a belief that nuclear warfare is immoral. Yet our nation's present commitment to the doctrine of deterrence assumes the production and deployment of nuclear weapons, and the *threat* to use them is implicit in the deterrence theory. Our ethical dilemma is that weapons whose use cannot be justified are needed to sustain the balance of fear in which nuclear warfare has been prevented for more than three decades. That ethical dilemma will remain until the nations can agree to eliminate nuclear weapons from the earth.

11. We recognize that the climate for public debate over military policies in the societies of the two great superpowers is not comparable. We recognize that many, including large numbers of fellow believers, within the Soviet Union and its allied states have the same yearnings for peace that we have. We know they are eager to speak against arms escalation policies of their governments, but may not enjoy the same freedom to do so as we enjoy. We agree that our impassioned call for restraint must therefore be addressed to both sides of the East-West confrontation. Nevertheless, we see that we have a special calling to address *our* government and society, and special competence to influence *our* processes of decision-making. It is in that understanding of our calling that we present the following recommendations.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Priority Concern

The most urgent concern of peacemaking in our day is the escalation of the nuclear arms race. We concur with and endorse the resolution on arms escalation and national security adopted by the ALC Church Council on June 25, 1981 (CC81.6.120).

ARMS ESCALATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Resolved, That the ALC Church Council express its conviction



"Swords into Plowshares" statue, a gift of the Soviet Union to the United Nations, is based on Isaiah 2:1-4. Created by Soviet sculptor Evgeniy Vuchetich, the bronze work is nine feet tall. (United Nations photo)

that, while the essential security for believers is in God, matters of temporary security are also important to human communities and a part of the Shalom which God desires for the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church Council reaffirm its conviction (CC79.6.147) that arms escalation and nuclear proliferation are against the best interest of the United States and the world since they threaten to diminish rather than enhance the prospects for national and global security and peace; urge the U.S. government to resume the process of strategic arms limitation talks; and ask the U.S. government to abide voluntarily by the arms limitation agreements reached in SALT II as a sign of good faith to the Soviet Union and the global community; and be it further

Resolved, That ALC members be encouraged to communicate a concern about reliance on increased armaments as a route to security and peace to their members of Congress and to the Executive Branch; and be it further

Resolved, That the ALC national offices provide educational helps to members concerning issues of national security and arms escalation, nuclear weaponry, and the steps which U.S. citizens may take to enhance global security based on means other than a revival of the arms race; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of Church in Society provide helps for congregational study of the call to peacemaking.

More specifically, we express the following in regard to nuclear weapons and the arms race:

a. The ALC declares its judgment that any use of weapons of mass destruction is immoral on the basis of the criteria for waging a just war. Weapons for nuclear, biological, or chemical warfare raise particularly serious questions.

b. The ALC believes that the goal of U.S. policy must be the *elimination* of nuclear weapons from the earth. To take first steps toward that goal, we urge our government to:

1) Invite the Soviet Union and other nations to join us in a

freeze on the development of any new nuclear weapons systems and on the production of any additional warheads or delivery vehicles within already-developed weapons systems.

- 2) Invite the Soviet Union and other nations to join us in a step-by-step reduction of the number of warheads and delivery vehicles which now exist.
- 3) Invite the Soviet Union and other nations to agree with us not to deploy nuclear weapons in a manner that makes warheads unverifiable, since the philosophy of security through deterrence requires that all parties be able to know the capabilities of all parties.
- 4) Show a willingness to take some risks through specific, unilateral steps, inviting adversary nations to reciprocate—understanding that continuation on the present course of nuclear terror carries exceedingly high risks.

2. Other Public Policy Concerns

As a community of believers The ALC also expresses itself on certain other policy questions that affect the personal lives of individual members, the life of the community, and the national and international shape of peace and justice.

- a. The ALC repeats its call to the government that selective objection to combatant military service, based on a conscientious following of the just-war ethic, be given legal status. The ALC reaffirms its position of support for those who, on the basis of conscience, choose to serve or choose not to serve in combatant military activity, under all circumstances or under particular circumstances. That is, The ALC stands by those who for reasons of conscience serve in the armed forces; it stands by those who refuse combatant service at any time (conscientious objectors); and it stands by those who refuse combatant service in particular circumstances (selective objectors).
- b. The ALC continues to support “conscription as authorized by Congress in time of declared national emergencies” and favors provision for “the regular defense needs of the country through a voluntary force” (Fifth General Convention, 1970). We urge that

adequate compensation be offered to make voluntary military service competitive with civilian employment.

c. The ALC affirms its pastoral support for those who struggle with other decisions of conscience in the war/peace arena, based on their understanding of biblical ethics. Pastoral concern does not imply agreement with particular stands taken.

d. The ALC supports legislation in Congress which would establish a National Academy of Peace and Conflict Resolution, and urges its creation as an important addition to the nation’s security enterprise.

3. Personal Implications

The peacemaking task in our time requires a mass movement of social change, the building of a solid majority in our nation and in other nations who will insist that national security be defined in less militaristic terms. The initial steps in that movement are taken in prayer, study, dialogue with others, and building a constituency for peace. That work is done not by political leaders alone, but by teachers, pastors, organizers, ethical leaders, prophets of the biblical tradition—and most especially by ordinary people who have a passion for peace. It begins with persons who have commitment. Toward encouraging ALC members in such commitment, we request:

- a. preparation of liturgical and devotional materials which will focus on our mandate to be makers of peace among the nations;
- b. development of educational materials that relate biblical and theological reflection on the church’s mandate for peacemaking to the reality of the arms race and the social cost of military spending;
- c. provision of information and assistance for the establishment of groups to work for peace, and means by which individuals may become active participants in the task of peacemaking.

4. Institutional Implications

The ALC commits itself to giving the mandate for peacemaking a high priority in its work. To that end, we agree:

- a. that The ALC establish the Mandate for Peacemaking as a church-wide emphasis for a period of not less than five years. That emphasis should focus on the church’s life in worship, study, leadership training, and ecumenical cooperation;

b. that all units of The ALC offices, its colleges, universities, and seminaries examine how the church's Mandate for Peacemaking can shape their future work and seek to implement the mandate in harmony with the policies of this document;

c. that theological reflection on the task of peacemaking be built into the church's life and mission;

d. that The ALC encourage its artists and its teachers to help the church learn through song, film, drama, poetry, and visual arts "the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42);

e. that congregations observe annual peace Sundays or peace weeks, focusing worship and education around themes of peacemaking, arms reduction, and establishment of global security with justice;

f. that The ALC work with other church organizations in developing creative ways of building confidence among the people of the nations—through people-to-people exchanges among countries, through letterwriting between parishes across national boundaries, and through the arrangement of forums for persons who have special gifts as communicators for peace;

g. that The ALC join with other denominations and religious traditions in ecumenical activities focusing on peace;

h. that The ALC listen carefully to the voices from the churches and peace movements in other parts of the world, particularly Europe, Japan, and developing countries, to garner international perspectives on peacemaking and to consult with others on international efforts for peace.

i. that The ALC encourage exploration of economic conversion in regions dependent on defense-related industries;

j. that The ALC strengthen its ministry with those in the military service and related fields, so as to foster mutual understanding and commonality of purpose;

k. that all members of The ALC be encouraged to pray regularly, in personal and congregational worship, for God "to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

(The following items are not part of the statement adopted by the 1982 general convention; they are provided to stimulate group discussion of the statement.)

1. "Mandate for Peacemaking" reminds us (A-3) that the church is a transnational community. What is your perception of the peace movement in Eastern countries? Of the role of the churches in it? How can believers in the two superpowers support one another in their mutual quest for peace?

2. Do you agree that promoting economic development among the poor nations (A-8) is vital to our national security? Our government plans to spend an average of \$1500 per citizen annually during the mid-1980s for military purposes, versus about \$15 per citizen annually for economic aid to developing nations. Compute what those totals equal for your family . . . for your congregation. How do you feel about the 100 to 1 ratio?

3. Lutherans officially subscribe to the just/unjust war ethic (A-9). It says war, to be justifiable, may be entered only (1) for a just cause, (2) as a last resort, (3) upon declaration by lawful authority, (4) if there is reasonable prospect of achieving the just goals. Further, war to be justifiable must be prosecuted (5) in ways that insure the immunity of non-combatants; (6) by means proportionate to the ends sought; (7) with promise of mercy to a vanquished enemy. All the criteria must be satisfied for a war to be just. Do you think nuclear war could meet these tests?

4. The statement claims we will have an ethical dilemma as long as we rely on the deterrence policy to keep the peace (A-10). Should the churches say to governments that readiness to use nuclear weapons is wrong in the sight of God? Should the churches make abolition of nuclear weapons the goal (B-1-b, p. 7)? Have group design a strategy for moving the world toward that goal.

5. Can nations ever be expected to confess publicly their failings? Even when quite sure their adversaries will not (A-11)? How can we try to see ourselves through the lenses worn by the Soviet people? What do they see in us that makes them fear us?

6. What "other decisions of conscience in the war/peace arena" (B-2-c) can you list? Payment of taxes for weapons systems that seem unnecessary or immoral? Trespassing on government property to make a witness against arms buildup? Others? Does "pastoral support" refer only to what clergy do?

7. Talk of ways to include the peace concern in your congregation's worship (B-3-a). Should public worship include regular prayers for the leaders and peoples of adversary nations? How should sermons properly address the global peace question? How do members of your congregation make known their wishes about the content of public worship?

8. If you live in an area where many civilian jobs depend on defense contracts, how might you look at the matter of economic conversion (B-4-i)? Is it possible for managers and workers to discuss the question together? (Helpful materials

on conversion from military to civilian production are available from the International Association of Machinists, Public Relations Dept., 1300 Connecticut Av. NW, Washington, DC 20036.)

9. Can your congregation provide opportunity for dialogue between those who serve us in the military and those who are civilians (B-4-j)? In what ways are military professionals also part of the peace movement?

RELATED MATERIALS

1. *Statements and Studies:*

- "War, Peace, and Freedom," adopted by the Third General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, October 19-25, 1966.
- "National Service and Selective Service Reform," adopted by the Fifth General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, October 21-27, 1970.
- "Peace, Justice, and Human Rights," adopted by the Sixth General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, October 4-10, 1972.
- "The Witness of U.S. Lutherans on Peace, War, and Conscience," adopted by the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., 1973.
- "Registration of Conscientious Objectors," a resolution of the Tenth General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, October 1-7, 1980.

2. *Packet for Peacemakers*, 20 items, including copies of or excerpts from the above statements, plus other resources for congregational study and action. ALC Office of Church in Society, 422 S. Fifth St., Minneapolis, MN 55415. \$3 contribution suggested.

3. *Peaceways: 16 Christian Perspectives on Security in a Nuclear Age*, Charles P. Lutz and Jerry L. Folk with other writers, Augsburg, 1983, 224 pages, \$7.95. Includes discussion helps and resource lists.

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