



## APPENDIX

### I. A COMPILATION OF ELCA SOCIAL TEACHING & POLICY DOCUMENTS

1989 social policy resolution, “Ban of Military-Style Semi-Automatic Weapons” (CA89.2.10). Encourages ELCA to study gun control in congregations and other settings and encourages government officials to explore weapon bans or regulation of lawful sales.

1993 social policy resolution, “Community Violence — Gun Control” (CA93.6.10). Supports gun control legislation. Calls upon congregations, synods, and agencies to work for passage and enforcement of local, state, and national legislation controlling the “manufacture, importation, exportation, sale, purchase, transfer, receipt, possession or transportation of handguns, assault weapons, and assault-like weapons and their parts, excluding rifles and shotguns used for hunting and sporting purposes, for use other than law enforcement and military purposes.”

1994 social message, “Community Violence.” Key points:

- **Violence** is woven through American society and intersects with racial, sexual, economic, and political domination. Many types of violence (random shootings, hate crimes, abuse of women and children) reach a broad range of individuals. The poor and persons of color are especially affected.
  - The causes of violence are multiple and complex, individual and social.
  - Easy access to weapons amplifies the problem.
  - The “tough on crime” approach has failed, and the root causes of violence must be addressed.
- **The church’s response is twofold:**
  - To respond out of the faith we profess. We believe that:
    - God intends peace and life for the human community. The gospel stresses forgiveness, healing, and new life. Christ broke down the walls dividing us from God and each other. The Holy Spirit works to wrench us from violence, to live in community.
    - Biblically and theologically, we are called to confront violence in ourselves and society, to cultivate nonviolence, to develop restorative responses to violent crime, to prevent violence, and to attack its complex causes.
    - Lutheran “civil use of the law” supports *citizens’ responsibility* to hold government accountable for protecting society and ensuring justice for all. We seek changes in policy and practice toward these ends.
  - To pursue as a community what counters violence through:

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- Worship. Through confession and absolution, God frees us from our captivity to violence and strengthens us to engage victims, perpetrators, and protectors.
  - Education and service. We must provide safe places, counseling, mediation, and youth programs. Let us address discrimination, poverty, unemployment, racism, domestic violence, community organizing, and economic development. Let us aim to restore individuals harmed and rebuild relationship in communities.
  - Advocacy. We must seek the reduction of violence in multiple ways:
    - Supporting gun control, acknowledging, however, that it does not address root causes.
    - Seeking justice for all, regardless of race, language, class, gender, or sexual orientation. Let us counter social and economic inequality and the brokenness that contributes to violence.
    - Joining inter-religious initiatives.
    - Offering spiritual and moral resources that replace fear/violence with hope/reconciliation.
    - Countering the culture of violence in media and society.
    - Building antiviolence coalitions in communities.
    - Fostering ongoing deliberation and public discussion of these issues.

69 1994 policy position paper, “Closing the Gun Show Loophole.” Supports federal law  
 70 requiring *background checks on all gun sales at gun shows*. (Currently only  
 71 federal firearms dealers are required to perform background checks of  
 72 purchasers; nonlicensed sellers are not affected.) The paper cites:

- The 1993 resolution “Community Violence — Gun Control” (above).
- The 1994 social message “Community Violence” (above).

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76 1995 social statement, *For Peace in God’s World*. The statement considers all  
 77 weaponry in the context of international peace. The key points:

- Lutheran theological concepts are broadly applicable here:
  - *Imago dei*: humans are created in God’s image, and all have dignity.
  - We are bound together in sin, which entangles our social structures.
  - Through the cross, God suffers with and for a sinful world.
  - God makes earthly peace possible, breaking down walls, creating a new humanity, and promising reconciliation.
- As church, we are divinely called to:
  - Pray.
  - Proclaim God’s peace, forgiveness, healing, and hope.
  - Equip the faithful to act for peace.
  - Maintain a faithful presence for peace that disturbs, reconciles, serves, and deliberates.

- 90 ○ Take action in the world as responsible citizens.
- 91 ○ Foster a vision of peace and of difference in unity.
- 92 ○ Promote human rights.
- 93 ○ Transform attitudes that encourage violence.
- 94 ○ Pursue the justice and social equality necessary for peace.
- 95 ○ Prioritize arms control and reduction of the arms trade.
- 96 ○ Hold governments accountable to the law and their people through
- 97 political advocacy.

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99 1996 memorial, “Rachel’s Day.” At the third triennial convention of Women of the  
 100 ELCA, the organization passed this memorial highlighting gun violence  
 101 against children and urging congregations to annually observe “Rachel’s  
 102 Day,” which references Jeremiah 31:15-17 (“Rachel ... refuses to be  
 103 comforted for her children, because they are no more”).

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105 1999 social message, “Suicide Prevention.” Most gun owners report keeping a gun in  
 106 the home for protection or self-defense, yet 83% of gun-related deaths in  
 107 these homes are suicides, often committed by someone other than the gun  
 108 owner (p.10).

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110 Recent social messages that touch on gun violence:

- 111 • “Living in a Time of Terrorism” (2004).
- 112 • “The Body of Christ and Mental Illness” (2012).
- 113 • “Gender-based Violence” (2015).

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115 August 2016 social policy resolution, “Gun Violence Prevention.” The document:

- 116 • Reaffirms the ELCA’s commitment to addressing the broad issue of  
 117 violence in society through worship, education, service, advocacy, and  
 118 moral deliberation, as called for in 1994 social message “Community  
 119 Violence” and the 2013 Council of Bishops letter on violence.
- 120 • Acknowledges the right of gun ownership for recreational use.
- 121 • Endorses background checks for all gun sales, including private sales.
- 122 • Supports renewing or replacing the expired Federal Assault Weapons  
 123 Ban, and using the definition of “assault weapon” found in the defeated  
 124 Assault Weapons Ban of 2013.
- 125 • Requests that the ELCA create a task force to organize actions consistent  
 126 with ELCA policy addressing gun violence prevention.

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## 129 II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF RECENT ACTION:

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131 March 4, 2013, Council of Bishops pastoral letter on violence (cites scripture of  
 132 Rachel weeping for her children). Key points:

- 133 • Let us reduce violence and make our communities safer.
- 134 • Every victim of violence is a special child of God.

- 135 • Let us confess our own brokenness and sin to address the problem.
- 136 • Local communities have an opportunity to engage this issue.
- 137 • The ELCA offers resources on the issue (statements, etc.).
- 138 • Let us begin by listening.
- 139 • The problem is larger than any weapon. “To focus only on guns is to miss
- 140 the depth of our vocation. Yet, guns and access are keys to the challenges
- 141 we face.”
- 142 • Let us engage in: 1) lament, 2) moral formation and discernment, and 3)
- 143 advocacy.

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145 2013 presiding bishop’s letter on the Overland Park, Kan., shooting at two Jewish  
 146 centers. Key points:

- 147 • We pray for the victims, their families, and the shooter.
- 148 • As Jews and Christians, we are bound together in our suffering and in our
- 149 God-given call to bring healing to a broken world.

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151 June 2015 presiding bishop’s message on the shooting at Emanuel AME Church,  
 152 Charleston, S.C. Key points:

- 153 • During a long season of disquiet in our country, racial tensions have
- 154 boiled over into violence.
- 155 • The shooting of nine African Americans manifests the sin of **racism**.
- 156 • This tragedy is personal for us: the shooter was an ELCA congregant, and
- 157 two of his victims were trained at an ELCA seminary.
- 158 • This was not simply an isolated act by a disturbed man; it indicts the
- 159 social framework upon which he built his vision of race.
- 160 • Innocents were killed. We look to the Innocent One, who was violently
- 161 executed for our transgressions — including the deadly sin of racism.
- 162 • Let us take a day to repent and mourn, then get to work by:
  - 163 ○ Examining our community, our church, and ourselves.
  - 164 ○ Being honest and speaking out about the racism within and around us.
  - 165 ○ Praying for insight, forgiveness, and courage.

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167 2015 Women of the ELCA, “Rachel’s Day.” Key points:

- 168 • An annual observance of gun violence against children is still needed.
- 169 • Resources on gun violence against children are available, including from
- 170 the Children’s Defense Fund.
- 171 • Children die by gunfire through mass shootings, gang violence, and
- 172 suicide.
- 173 • Though gun control is a polarizing issue, scripture offers common ground.
- 174 • The Rachel of scripture refused to be comforted. Her feelings bear witness
- 175 to the urgency and gravity of gun violence against children, and the need
- 176 to act.
- 177 • Activities for Rachel’s Day and beyond, keeping the focus on children,
- 178 might include:
  - 179 ○ Learning facts, debunking myths.

- 180                   ○ Hosting table talks, summits, and follow-up sessions.  
 181                   ○ Praying (litany provided), worshiping, and addressing gun violence in  
 182                   Sunday school.  
 183                   ○ Connecting with local organizations to take action.  
 184                   ○ Developing a congregational plan.  
 185                   ○ Sharing with others what strategies worked.  
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- 187   June 13, 2016, presiding bishop’s message after the Orlando nightclub shooting. Key  
 188   points:
- 189                   • The Orlando victims are not “others.” By killing them, we are killing  
 190                   ourselves.
  - 191                   • In the gunman’s mind, the LGBTQ community was severed from our  
 192                   common humanity.
  - 193                   • In a divided and polarized society, division breeds demonization. This  
 194                   hate crime was shaped by our culture of division.
  - 195                   • Let us reconcile, examine ourselves and our church, and acknowledge our  
 196                   divisiveness.
  - 197                   • Let us stand with those who are “othered.”
  - 198                   • Let us “speak peace and reconciliation into the cacophony of hatred and  
 199                   division. We must live the truth that all people are created in God’s  
 200                   image.”
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- 202   2016 gun violence alert (after Orlando shooting): “As a nation we mourn, and as  
 203   citizens we must act to end gun violence.” We must urge our representatives to  
 204   support gun safety measures. A sample letter endorses:
- 205                   • Laws that control the manufacture and sale of weapons not used for  
 206                   hunting, sport, law enforcement, or military purposes.
  - 207                   • Laws that monitor the sale of weapons, stop potential terrorists from  
 208                   obtaining guns, and consider the mental health of the purchaser.
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- 210   July 6, 2016 — ELCA joins an interfaith group of leaders in a letter to Congress,  
 211   urging legislation to curb gun violence, including:
- 212                   • Universal background checks on every gun purchase.
  - 213                   • A ban on all high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines.
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- 215   July 2016, presiding bishop’s message to rostered leaders on the anniversary of the  
 216   Charleston shooting. The bishop calls on leaders to address racism, endorsing the  
 217   recommendations of the AME Council of Bishops:
- 218                   • Condemning racism in the pulpit and the classroom.
  - 219                   • Pursuing pulpit exchanges with a communion or interfaith organization  
 220                   of a different race or religion.
  - 221                   • Talking to local political leaders about policing, education, housing, and  
 222                   other issues in which race is a factor.
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224 July 20, 2016, presiding bishop’s message on shooting attacks against police in Baton  
 225 Rouge and Dallas. Key points:

- 226 • *“My soul is bereft of peace: I have forgotten what happiness is”*  
 227 (Lamentations 3:17).  
 228 • Lutherans understand that we live in a world of human brokenness and  
 229 that the state has the authority and obligation to protect its citizens. Good  
 230 government and peace are among the things we ask for when we pray,  
 231 “Give us today our daily bread.”  
 232 • Not all citizens have the same experience with law enforcement; both the  
 233 nation and our church grapple with this problem.  
 234 • Violence targeting the police is a threat to all and solves nothing.  
 235 • There are good police; when they die in the line of duty, we mourn them  
 236 and the families they leave behind.  
 237 • Every morning brings us anew the hope, mercy, and steadfast love of the  
 238 Lord (Lamentations 3:21-23).  
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240 Feb 16, 2018 — The presiding bishop responds to the Parkland, Fla., high school  
 241 shooting. Key points:

- 242 • Rachel weeps (Matthew 2:18), and we lament.  
 243 • Let us pray for the victims’ families, for the shooter, and for those  
 244 unmoved by the bloodshed.  
 245 • Let us acknowledge our failings and seek God’s guidance in reducing the  
 246 availability of assault weapons and increasing public access to **mental**  
 247 **health** care.  
 248 • A broader range of issues is at play. How are we complicit in the **culture**  
 249 **of violence**, hatred, anger, and fear? How can we build a counterculture  
 250 in which people experience God’s intended peace and life abundant?  
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252 March 2018 presiding bishop’s letter to Congress after the Parkland, Fla., high  
 253 school shooting. Key points:

- 254 • Congress must prevent easy access to assault weapons, renewing the  
 255 Federal Assault Weapons Ban and defining “assault weapon” according to  
 256 the defeated Assault Weapons Ban of 2013.  
 257 • Congress must strengthen federal background checks and mandate  
 258 responsible management of gun sales nationwide.  
 259 • The ELCA’s positions can be found in its social policy resolutions of 1993  
 260 and 2016.  
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262 Oct 27, 2018 — The presiding bishop responds to the mass shooting at Tree of Life  
 263 synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pa. Key points:

- 264 • Anti-Semitism is on the rise.  
 265 • As stated in the 1994 “Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community,”  
 266 anti-Semitism is an affront to the gospel, and the church must oppose  
 267 such bigotry in its own circles and the larger society.  
 268 • We reject hate-filled violence, whether against Christians, Sikhs, or Jews.

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- 273 2018 Advocacy Alert to mourn violence and seek tightened gun legislation. Key
- 274 points:
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- 281 March 2019 presiding bishop's message on the mosque shootings in Christchurch,
- 282 New Zealand. Key points:
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- Let us reach out to local synagogues and our Jewish colleagues and friends.
  - Let us demonstrate our love as an extension of God's love.
- Gun violence figures in racism, anti-Semitism, hate crimes, and mass shootings.
  - Let us pass and enforce laws that control the manufacture and sale of weapons not used for hunting, sport, law enforcement, or military purposes.
- We mourn for the victims, their families, and the responders.
  - Together with ecumenical and inter-religious partners, we condemn hatred, bigotry, racism, and violence.
  - *Imago dei*: we are all created in the image of God.
  - Let us support and reach out to our Muslim neighbors.
  - "May we see in this devastation the possibility to be Christ's presence with our neighbors in this world — to be present in their suffering and to be partners in God's justice and peace."