

A resolution concerning the banning of nuclear weapons (in harmony with the national Back from the Brink Campaign)

Whereas, “Church in Society: a Lutheran Perspective,” an ELCA social teaching statement, calls for the church to engage in moral deliberations regarding governmental policy, and “discern when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers”; and

Whereas, the ELCA social teaching statement “For Peace in God’s World” calls for the church to engage actively in making peace not war, naming and resisting “idols that lead to false security, injustice, and war, and [calling] for repentance”; and

Whereas, nuclear weapons programs divert public funds and expertise from health care, education, repair of the infrastructure, disaster relief, and other vital services; and

Whereas, the entire life cycle of nuclear weapons (from mining to disposal) causes harm for generations, even if the weapons are never exploded; and

Whereas, the risk of a nuclear war/omnicide has been greatly increased by recent circumstances, be it

Resolved, that the Office of the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod communicate to members of Congress who represent members of congregations within the synod boundaries and Minnesota U.S. Senators the requests

For them to lead a global effort to avert catastrophe and prevent nuclear war by changing US policy to:

- renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first;
- end the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack;
- take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert;
- cancel the plan to replace the entire US arsenal with enhanced weapons measures
- pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals; and
- sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, now international law.

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Adopted by:

Background to the 2022 resolution concerning the banning of nuclear weapons

This resolution harmonizes with the grass roots campaign “Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War” which has been endorsed by many organizations and municipalities, including the city of Minneapolis (<https://preventnuclearwar.org>).

Nine nations collectively have approximately 13,100 nuclear weapons in their arsenals, most of which are far more destructive than those that killed hundreds of thousands of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945.

The detonation of even a small number of these weapons could have catastrophic human and environmental consequences that could affect everyone on the planet.

The United States maintains several hundred nuclear missiles in underground silos on hair-trigger alert, capable of being launched within minutes after a presidential order, which greatly increases the risk of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized launch.

The climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and recent racial justice uprisings have highlighted the need for greater investment in our healthcare system and our communities.

Over the next 30 years, the United States plans to spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion to replace its entire nuclear arsenal and the bombers, missiles and submarines that deliver them with new designs, effectively triggering a new arms race.

US taxpayers spend over \$2 million every HOUR of every day to maintain the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

The United States, as well as Britain, China, France and Russia, are obligated under the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to take concrete steps toward eliminating their nuclear arsenals.

In July 2017, 122 nations approved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which entered into force on January 22, 2021, making it illegal under international law to develop, test, produce, manufacture, or otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

From “For Peace in God’s World”, ELCA Social Statement, p. 18-19:

“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;

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."

From a Prior ELCA statement

"We call upon the governments of the United States and other nuclear powers to persist in the efforts to arrive at effective multilateral agreements on the cessation of all kinds of nuclear weapons testing with provision for adequate inspection and control. Toward this end we believe that a moratorium on testing should be continued until every opportunity to secure such effective agreements has been utilized. We advocate this position not only because hazards to health will thereby be kept at a minimum but also because agreement on the cessation of testing could serve to allay suspicion and provide an international experience in inspection and control which are deemed essential to the regulation and reduction of armaments in a manner that will not endanger the security of any nation.

Recognizing that an open-ended armaments race poses grave peril for ourselves and all nations, we urge the governments of the United States and Canada to engage in untiring search for new and viable forms of arms limitations and control. We believe that this requires dealing realistically with the unsolved problems of the cold war. Any approach should therefore include efforts directed at relaxation on international tensions and settlement of political problems, and calls for the readiness for step-by-step progress and patience with limited achievement."

--A Statement of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1960