



ENGAGE
Lutherans for Gun Violence Prevention

ENGAGE Table Talk – II

Biblical Precepts

The will of God is nonviolence

Genesis Creation Story is nonviolent

Violence happens because of human choice

The Fifth Commandment calls us to not kill or murder.

Warfare in OT is political violence theologically justified, yet contrary to God's will

Isaiah gives vision of "swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks".

Nonviolence is the foundational ethic of Jesus Christ

Paul is theologian of nonviolence: Fruits of Spirit and Armor of God

The state is justified in using harsh methods for the sake of order

Romans 13 is bookended by government responsibility to love

Revelation concludes with vision of "New Heaven-New Earth: No more dying or crying".

ELCA Positions on Gun Violence Prevention

The 1989 Churchwide Assembly resolved to ban military-style semi-automatic weapons.

The 1993 CWA resolved to support the Brady Bill and urged several controls.

The 1994 Church Council calls on members to become involved in GVP actions.

The 1995 Social Statement "For Peace in God's World" calls the people to create peaceful environments.

The 2013 CWA urged members to contact elected officials and advocate for universal background checks, prevention of gun trafficking, reporting of lost or stolen guns, the need to address mental health issues and suicide prevention.

The 2016 CWA directed the Church Council and ELCA Committees to address universal background checks, an assault weapons ban, prevention of those on

the Terrorist watch List from purchasing guns, and to organize entire Church for GVP.

The SPAS overwhelmingly passed strong resolutions in 2013, 2016, 2017 and 2022 including calling upon legislators to address universal background checks, assault weapons ban, prevention of those on the TWL from purchasing guns and opposition to Stand your Ground and Permitless Carry Bills.

The Evidence

There are over 45,000 gun deaths in the USA each year: 1/3 homicides and 2/3 suicides.

The USA has the highest gun homicide rate, the highest number of guns per capita, and the highest rate of deaths due to assault than other Western Developed Nations (WDN)

The USA has more homicides by gun than all of the other high income countries combined. Americans murder each other with guns at a rate of 20x higher than other high income countries. (OECD)

US rate of firearm homicide for children ages 5-14 is 13x higher than any other WDN. The gun homicide rate in the USA is 12-20x the average in WDN.

Since Florida passed "stand your ground" law, gun related homicides increased 31.6%.

48% more police officers are killed in states like MN that do not mandate UBC. States without a SYG law saw a decrease in homicides by 48%
74% of MN gun owners support background checks. 84% of all Minnesotans.

A 2013 FBI study concluded that an unarmed civilian is 20x more likely to stop a rampage shooting than an armed civilian.

A gun in the home increases chance of being killed by 72%, is 22x more likely to be used in suicide, homicide or accident than in self defense, and increases risk of an abused woman being murdered by 6x.

Toddlers kill more people than do terrorists and are 2x more likely to be killed than police.

American women are 16x more likely to be murdered by guns than in other WDN.

SYG laws in Florida resulted in a significant increase in homicides.

In Minnesota, in 2021, there were 571 gun deaths, of which 88.2% were men, .08% were youth (ages 0-19), and 11% female. Men account for 91.3% of suicides. Furthermore, police accounted for 12 fatal shootings. The #1 age bracket (20-29)

accounts for 132 deaths. Accidents accounted for five deaths. In 2017, Hennepin County accounted for 103 deaths and Ramsey County 52 deaths. Racially, Whites accounted for 320 suicides and 30 homicides, Blacks accounted for 12 suicides and 62 homicides, American Indians four suicides and 10 homicides, Multiple Race was six suicides and six homicides, and Hmong were five suicides and two homicides. Gun deaths by law enforcement: four Black, four White, two Native /American and one Puerto Rican. In Minnesota, suicide accounts for 68.4% of all gun deaths, disproportionately by males in rural areas. 9 of 10 suicides are committed by White people. 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not die by suicide. A recent Harvard study found that the presence of a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide by 3-5 times.

NRA And Founding Documents

The NRA is the most powerful lobbying group in the USA. Their motto could be: "Never give an inch to support GVP laws." Their opposition to common sense gun laws is near 100%. They appeal to the 2nd Amendment: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." Originally, the amendment was focused on authorizing states to organize militias for their protection. But the states, especially those in the South, wanted militias to control slave rebellions. Furthermore, since the USA was a frontier nation, militias were used to control and dominate the Native population. Yet, in 2008, the D.C. v Heller case gave support for people to have guns for personal use to protect their homes, a decision that opened the flood gates to an individual right to bear arms anywhere, in spite of the fact that the decision also mentioned the right of states to pass laws for regulation. The NRA focuses on the second half of the amendment and forget about the "well regulated militia" portion. The NRA opposes research in causes of GV. The Declaration of Independence speaks of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" for ALL. The Constitution says it is the duty of government to "insure domestic tranquility...and promote the general welfare." Also note the Amendments promote nonviolence in our national citizenship.

Common Sense Gun Laws

1. Support for universal background checks from licensed and private sellers.
2. Denial of right to purchase for felons, severely mentally ill, those convicted of domestic abuse or awaiting trial.
3. Pass a "Red Flag" bill that would enable family members and law enforcement officers to petition the court to have guns temporarily removed from those who appear in danger of attempting suicide.
4. Requiring trigger locks on guns and safes for gun storage.
5. Development and sale of smart guns.
6. Prohibition of assault weapons and sale of large ammo magazines.
7. Oppose Stand your Ground, Constitutional Carry and Permitless Carry Bills
8. Registration and licensing of all guns.
9. Mandating gun safety training.
10. Increased funding for mental health treatment.
11. Fund national research on GVP.

In the Home and Automobile

1. Keep guns unloaded and locked, with ammunition and guns separated and ammunition also in a locked safe.
2. Install cable loops through the barrel. Consider not having guns in home.
3. Before your children go to a friend's house to play, inquire of the parents if they have guns and if they are locked-up. If not, suggest the kids play at your house.
4. Do not keep a loaded weapon in the glove compartment.

ENGAGE

1. Join the conversation about GVP by signing up on [Facebook/ENGAGE-ELCA](#)
2. Invite the ENGAGE Team to lead a GVP presentation in your congregation.
3. Sign up to be part of the ENGAGE Action Team
4. Join the Wednesday ENGAGE: Connecting the Dots salons to talk about various GVP (Gun Violence Prevention) aspects. Message me for access code (letnesron@gmail.com)
5. Participate in quarterly online ENGAGE-FOCUS conversations on current GVP issues. See: www.spas-elca.org
6. CONTACT: Rev. Dr. Ron Letnes (letnesron@gmail.com) 763-291-4003 for information and arrangements.