

1 **RC2022-04 Memorial concerning the banning of nuclear weapons**

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3 **Whereas**, “Church in Society: a Lutheran Perspective,” an ELCA social teaching statement,  
4 calls for the church to engage in moral deliberations regarding governmental policy, and “discern  
5 when to support and when to confront society’s cultural patterns, values, and powers”; and  
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7 **Whereas**, the ELCA social teaching statement “For Peace in God’s World” calls for the church  
8 to engage actively in making peace not war, naming and resisting “idols that lead to false  
9 security, injustice, and war, and [calling] for repentance”; and  
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11 **Whereas**, nuclear weapons programs divert public funds and expertise from health care,  
12 education, repair of the infrastructure, disaster relief, and other vital services; and  
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14 **Whereas**, the entire life cycle of nuclear weapons (from mining to disposal) causes harm for  
15 generations, even if the weapons are never exploded; and  
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17 **Whereas**, the risk of a nuclear war/omnicide has been greatly increased by recent circumstances;  
18 therefore, be it  
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20 **Resolved**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod in assembly memorialize the 2022 Churchwide  
21 Assembly (CWA) to engage the ELCA United Nations and Advocacy offices to take a leadership  
22 role in current opportunities (such as the *Back from the Brink* campaign) to bring together the  
23 nine nuclear nations to work toward the implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of  
24 Nuclear Weapons; and be it further  
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26 **Resolved**, that the Minneapolis Area Synod in assembly memorialize the 2022 CWA to engage  
27 the ELCA United Nations and Advocacy offices in urging federal officials to lead a global effort  
28 to avert catastrophe and prevent nuclear war by changing United States policy to: renounce the  
29 option of using nuclear weapons first again; end the sole, unchecked authority of any president to  
30 launch a nuclear attack; take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; cancel the plan to  
31 replace the entire U.S arsenal with enhanced weapons measures; pursue a verifiable agreement  
32 among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals; and sign and ratify the Treaty on  
33 the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, now international law; and be it further  
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35 **Resolved**, that this Synod Assembly memorialize the 2022 CWA to ask the Office of the  
36 Presiding Bishop to communicate the intent of the Churchwide Assembly to the appropriate  
37 federal officials.  
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41 **Adopted and submitted by Minneapolis Synod, Central Conference, February 6, 2022**

43 **Background to the 2022 resolution concerning the banning of nuclear weapons**

44 This resolution harmonizes with the grass roots campaign “Back from the Brink: The Call to  
45 Prevent Nuclear War” which has been endorsed by many organizations and municipalities,  
46 including the city of Minneapolis (<https://preventnuclearwar.org>). It is intended to add to, not  
47 substitute for, the resolution passed in 2021.

48 Nine nations collectively have approximately 13,100 nuclear weapons in their arsenals, most of  
49 which are far more destructive than those that killed hundreds of thousands of people in  
50 Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945. The detonation of even a small number of these  
51 weapons could have catastrophic human and environmental consequences that could affect  
52 everyone on the planet. The United States maintains several hundred nuclear missiles in  
53 underground silos on hair- trigger alert, capable of being launched within minutes after a  
54 presidential order, which greatly increases the risk of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized  
55 launch.

56 Over the next 30 years, the United States plans to spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion to replace its  
57 entire nuclear arsenal and the bombers, missiles and submarines that deliver them with new  
58 designs, effectively triggering a new arms race. US taxpayers spend over \$2 million every  
59 HOUR of every day to maintain the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

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

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

64 In July 2017, 122 nations approved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which  
65 entered into force on January 22, 2021, making it illegal under international law to develop, test,  
66 produce, manufacture, or otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other  
67 nuclear explosive devices. None of the nine nuclear weapon nations have ratified this treaty.

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

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70 “Give high priority to arms control and reduction. We particularly urge a sharp reduction in the  
71 number of weapons of mass destruction. We call for arms control agreements that are substantial,  
72 equitable, verifiable, and progressive. We support mutual confidence-building measures to  
73 improve mutually assured security. In particular, we give priority to:

- 74 ◆ agreements among the leading nuclear powers to reduce their nuclear stockpiles and to  
75 decrease the possibility of nuclear confrontation or accident;
- 76 ◆ the successful negotiation of a renewed Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the  
77 strengthening of mechanisms to monitor and enforce nuclear treaties, and efforts that move  
78 toward the elimination of nuclear weapons; .....

79 Control and reduce the arms trade. Heavily armed nations continue to spend billions on arms. As  
80 one of the world’s leading arms exporters, the United States has special responsibility to reduce

81 arms sales and to seek proper international control agreements over the worldwide sale and  
82 transfer of arms by the major exporters.”

83

84 **From a Prior ELCA statement**

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

95

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

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

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