

ENGAGE

Lutherans for Gun Violence Prevention

A Public Witness Work Group of the SPAS

MISSION

MEDITATE on, EDUCATE about and ADVOCATE for gun violence prevention in the nonviolent Spirit of Jesus Christ

ENGAGE was formed in 2013. What do we do and what have we done?

1. We lead gun violence prevention (GVP) conversations in congregations with the presentations covering Biblical foundations for weapons use, ELCA positions on GVP since 1989, statistics, positions in the United States' Constitution, specifically the Second Amendment, and in-home safety and law-making actions.
2. We present a website (www.engageelca.org) which features downloadable Biblical references to weapon violence, specific actions for parents to create safer homes where guns are used, data and analytics for fact-based reference, examples of countries where gun laws provide effective gun violence deterrence, and a study course titled "Love your Neighbor" which can be used in homes and congregations. A regular Blog post covers timely GVP actions and approaches to GVP from personal and political/public positions.
3. We host a Facebook page (ENGAGE-ELCA) which features GVP articles and opportunities for social media conversation and learning. We have about 180 followers. All people can join.
4. We partner with Protect Minnesota and the Protect Minnesota Interfaith Alliance for Gun Safety, as well as the Protect Minnesota Advocacy Committee to cooperatively address gun safety and political/public actions commensurate with their faiths.
5. We publicize and have a presence at GVP rallies and State Capitol press gatherings.
6. We have established an ENGAGE Action Team which is committed to activating concern in congregations and stir personal efforts towards GVP.
7. We host a weekly Zoom GVP conversation which covers areas of education and advocacy methodologies.
8. We sponsored a resolution at the Conference Assembly which was

passed and will be presented at the SPAS Assembly.

9. We co-authored a Bible-based, Lutheran-based congregational GVP study which has been presented to ELCA Church-wide for wider usage, and is being presented for piloting in selected Chicago congregations through the Division of Domestic Mission and Poverty and Justice Ministries.
10. The ENGAGE website (www.engageelca.org) was featured in the ELCA “60 Days” GVP meditation last summer as one of the areas for church-wide study.
11. We host a table at various SPAS events.
12. We are working to present ENGAGE and “Love Your Neighbor” to the other five Minnesota ELCA Synods.
13. Out of 29 ELCA Synods surveyed, the SPAS is one of TWO synods which have an established GVP committee/work group, with the other being in Los Angeles.

Last year, 470 Minnesotans died of gun violence. Nearly 80% of gun deaths were by suicide. St. Paul has suffered a 100% increase in gun violence over the previous year. Nationally, the United States’ rate of gun violence is far and away the highest among Western Developed Nations. COVID-19 and the national socio/political climate has resulted in a significant rise in the forces of White Supremacy and xenophobia, leading to record gun sales and the rise of domestic violence. GVP efforts are timely for our synod, city, state and nation. ENGAGE is positioned to assist in creating safer home, congregation and state environments.

Blessings and Peace!

Ron Letnes (Rev. Dr.)
ENGAGE-Chair