

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.

Minnesota Gun Reality

Depending on the scale, Minnesota ranks either #8 and #14 on the national gun safety continuum. giffords.org gives us a C+ rating. In 2019, Minnesota suffered 470 deaths, of which 355 were suicides, 112 were homicides, and 3 were accidents. The racial breakdown was: White: 320 suicides, 30 homicides and 3 accidents; Black: 12 suicides, 62 homicides and 0 accidents; American Indian: 4 suicides, 10 homicides and 0 accidents; Multiple Race: 6 suicides, 6 homicides and 0 accidents; Hmong: 5 suicides, 2 homicides.

2020 was a year of adjustments. COVID 19 prevented in-person congregational presentations. However, our reach continued and expanded online and through our partnership network.

ENGAGE Website

Our website, www.engageelca.org, features timely commentary on the various aspects of GVP (gun violence prevention). Gun violence is like an octopus with many socio-political tentacles. GVP entails personal actions as well as public/political action. We support specific gun laws that make a difference, laws such as Extreme Risk Protection Orders (Red Flag Law) which authorize the legal and temporary removal of a personal weapon from a person who is at risk to themselves or to others. Another law we advocate is Universal Background Checks. Presently in Minnesota, if you purchase a weapon from a licensed Federal dealer, you must go through a criminal background check. BUT, if you purchase a weapon from a private at a gun show or personally, or online, you do not have to go through a background check. We believe ALL gun sales necessitate background checks. The website is for congregation and personal study use. There is a five session course of study called "Love your Neighbor" which can also be used for in-home study. "Table Talk" is another more concise study. Biblical references and ELCA positions are abundant. Comparisons with other countries are presented. Statistics are clear.

ENGAGE: Connecting the Dots

We began a weekly online GVP conversation, led by ENGAGE leadership and guest speakers. We meet on Wednesdays at 10:00 AM. We have reflected on Biblical references, GVP laws, the relationship between GVP and authoritarianism, the connection between GVP and racism and economic inequality, and many other aspects, necessitating a multi-action approach. Feel welcome to join the conversation by contacting: ronletnes@hotmail.com

FACEBOOK

ENGAGE has a Facebook page of over 170 subscribers. People can write and post opinions and resources. Feel welcome to join the community. Go to: [ENGAGE-ELCA](#).

ENGAGE Action Team (EAT)

Over 80 people have signed-on to be part of the EAT. The purpose is commitment to taking action: writing letters, making phone calls, sending emails, joining in a demonstration to advocate for GVP measures. You can be part of EAT by contacting: ronletnes@hotmail.com.

PARTNERSHIPS

ENGAGE is represented on the Protect Minnesota-Interfaith Alliance for Gun Safety. We work with representatives of the Muslim, Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant faith traditions. Our reach is state wide. We are developing an ecumenical GVP curriculum which can be utilized in mosques, synagogues and churches. We are working with Braver Angels to promote dialogue between gun owners and non-gun owners. Also, ENGAGE was a resource for the ELCA Church Wide 2020 summer devotional GVP 60-day outreach.

OUTREACH

ENGAGE is equipped to lead presentations in-person or virtually in your congregation. People can join our weekly Wednesday “Connecting the Dots” conversation. We are committed to making our homes, congregations and communities more gun safe. It is possible. We can do better. We are called by the Gospel to practice the ways of love.

Respectfully and Gratefully Submitted,
Ron Letnes (Rev. Dr.)

Chair-ENGAGE: Lutherans for Gun Violence Prevention