

ENGAGE: Lutherans for Gun Violence Prevention

SPAS 2021 Report

THE MISSION

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

COMMITMENTS

PROPHETIC: To address GVP out of Biblical-ELCA Confessional positions.

PERSONAL: To address causes-effects-prevention of gun violence upon individuals, families and in-homes.

PUBLIC: To address causes-effects-prevention of gun violence in public spaces such as schools, agencies and places of business.

POLITICAL: To address causes-effects-prevention of gun violence through legislative political action.

THE REALITY

The most recent statistics indicated 513 Minnesotans died of gun violence. According to Everystat.org, 76% of Minnesotans died by suicide. This means 23% died by homicide and 1% by unintentional action. Most suicides occur in rural areas and homicides in the urban areas. Homicides in St. Paul and Minneapolis rose significantly in 2021. Minnesota has the 44th highest rate of gun violence in the USA. Nationally, Everytown reports that access to guns increases risk of suicide by 3x. The homicide rate in the USA is 26x higher than that of other High Income Countries (HIC). Black Americans are 10x more likely to die by homicide than White Americans. Guns are the leading cause of death for children and teens. Access to a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it 5x more likely that a woman will be killed. Women in the USA are 28x more likely to be killed by gun violence than in other HIC. [giffords.org](https://www.giffords.org) posits that states

with stronger gun laws have fewer gun deaths. Legislation in Minnesota to pass Universal Background Checks and Red Flag Laws has stalled. These laws will save lives while protecting the right of responsible citizens to purchase and use a weapon.

ACTIONS AND RESOURCES

CONGREGATION PRESENTATIONS: We visit congregations and present TABLE TALK seminars covering Biblical, Statistical, Constitutional, ELCA positions and Action steps people can use to promote gun safety. We also have a presence at SPAS events. Invite us: letnesron@gmail.com

FOCUS: We initiated quarterly online evening teach-ins to address timely issues. In October we focused on “Guns and Mental Health”. In December the focus was on “BeSMART: In-Home Gun Safety”. Check SPAS EVENTS/ CALENDAR for upcoming events.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: Each Wednesday from 11:00-12:00 we have conversations on current aspects of GVP. Contact: letnesron@gmail.com for access.

ENGAGE-ACTION-TEAM: A committed group dedicated to taking action to move GVP forward. People can join the group by sending an email to: letnesron@gmail.com

WEB SITE: www.engageelca.org is filled with BLOG commentary and resources for individual and congregational use and reflection.

ENGAGE-ELCA: A Facebook page for commentary and resources. Become a FRIEND.

INTER-FAITH ALLIANCE FOR GUN SAFETY (IAGS): ENGAGE partners with the Protect Minnesota IAGS, a team of concerned

Jewish, Muslim, Roman Catholic and Lutheran sisters and brothers to promote gun safety. We are developing a “Tool-Kit” for use in faith communities throughout Minnesota.

RALLIES FOR CHANGE: We joined with other GVP organizations to encourage legislators to pass gun safety laws.

FOR A GUN SAFE MINNESOTA!

ENGAGE Team: Rev. Rolf Olson, Rev. Bob Kriesel, Jay Thacker and Rev. Dr. Ron Letnes, Chair

ENGAGE: Lutherans for Gun Violence Prevention
A Public Witness Work Group of the SPAS
Contact: letnesron@gmail.com