**Memorial 2019-2: A Resolution on Gun Violence**

WHEREAS deliberate acts to harm or kill innocent people are not God’s intention for human community, as commanded in Exodus 20:13, “You shall not kill.”; and

WHEREAS Jesus teaches us in Matthew 5:38-39 to respond to violence in restorative ways: “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other one also…”; and

WHEREAS gun violence in the USA has included recent mass shootings at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, First Baptist Church in Southerland Springs, Texas, a music festival in Las Vegas Nevada, Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and many other places where the innocent were murdered with assault rifles[[1]](#footnote-1); and

WHEREAS every day, 318 Americans are shot and 96 die from their wounds[[2]](#footnote-2) with the marginalized population twice as likely to die from gun violence[[3]](#footnote-3); and

WHEREAS regarding the Second Amendment, which states that “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed”, the Supreme Court has declared that “The Court’s opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.”[[4]](#footnote-4); and

WHEREAS according to Lutheran theology, government is responsible under God to protect its citizens, and as citizens in a democracy, we have the responsibility to hold government accountable for this protection by seeking changes in policies and practices toward these ends[[5]](#footnote-5); and

WHEREAS in 1993, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted a resolution to “communicate to Congress and the President of the United States the urgent concern of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America regarding the violence associated with the widespread availability of handguns and military assault weapons….to call upon congregations, synods, and appropriate agencies to work for the passage and strict enforcement of local, state, and national legislation as appropriate, that rigidly controls the manufacture, importation, exportation, sale, purchase, transfer, receipt, possession of handguns, assault weapons, and assault-like weapons and their parts, excluding rifles and shotguns used for hunting and sporting purposes, for use other than law enforcement and military purposes.”[[6]](#footnote-6); and

WHEREAS twenty-five years after the ELCA Churchwide Assembly passed CA93.06.10, more than 30,000 people die and more than 70,000 are injured by guns in the USA annually[[7]](#footnote-7) as gun violence continues to plague our nation, particularly as it relates to the disproportionate loss of life among those marginalized and the mass murders of our most vulnerable citizens;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA advocate

with lawmakers on a local and national level **to adequately fund gun violence research by the Centers for Disease Control, and** to create and pass gun laws that save lives, such as: banning semi-automatic weapons that fire high-velocity rounds, banning accessories that simulate automatic weapons, establishing a database of gun sales and universal background checks, closing gun show and secondhand sales loopholes, raising the firearm purchase age to 21, dedicating more funds to mental health research and professionals, increasing funding for school security, encouraging responsible gun ownership, and holding gun owners responsible when their weapons are used illegally due to their negligence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA request our

Synod Bishop to appoint a task force of rostered leaders and lay leaders, including representatives of particularly vulnerable communities and marginalized voices, that will convene to provide resources and guidance to congregations and other ministries on how to address gun violence and assist those who are victims of gun violence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA memorialize

the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to adequately fund gun violence research by the Centers for Disease Control, and to advocate with lawmakers on a local and national level to create and pass gun laws that save lives, such as: banning semi-automatic weapons that fire high-velocity rounds, banning accessories that simulate automatic weapons, establishing a database of gun sales and universal background checks, closing gun show and secondhand sales loopholes, raising the firearm purchase age to 21, dedicating more funds to mental health research and professionals, increasing funding for school security, encouraging responsible gun ownership, and holding gun owners responsible when their weapons are used illegally due to their negligence.

Submitted by:

Dr. Hermann Engelhardt Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale

The Rev. Dr. Nancy Kraft Ascension Lutheran Church, Towson

Jason Day Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore

The Rev. Sara Yotter Joy Reigns Lutheran Church, Edgewater

Connie Otto Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale

William Kinsley Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore

The Rev. Daniel Swanson Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale

Val Llewellyn Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale

Antoinette Royster Christ Lutheran Church, LaVale

**Anticipated Memorial Implementation Analysis**

*(Please attach this form to each Memorial submitted)*

Memorial Title \_A Resolution on Gun Violence\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated financial implications of memorial if adopted for:

Churchwide Organization

1. Work to adequately fund gun violence research

2. Advocate with local and national law-maker to create and pass gun laws in ways identified in the Memorial (banning semi-automatic weapons, banning accessories that simulate automatic weapons, universal background checks, raising firearm purchase to age 21……)

Synods

Congregations

Anticipated staff or personnel implications of memorial if adopted for:

Churchwide Organization

Serving as an advocate for passing gun laws on all levels

Synods:

Serving as an advocate for passing gun laws on all levels

Congregations

Serving as an advocate for passing gun laws on all levels

1. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, an assault rifle is any of various intermediate-range, magazine fed military rifles (such as the AK-47) that can be set for automatic or semiautomatic fire; also: a rifle that resembles a military assault rifle but is designed to allow only semiautomatic fire. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. 2018. “Key gun violence statistics.” www.bradycampaign.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ferdman, R.A. 2016. “The racial divide in America’s gun violence.” *The Washington Post.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\_Amendment\_to\_the\_United\_States\_COnstitution#District\_of\_Columbia [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ELCA Conference of Bishops. 2018. Statement of support for March for Our Lives on March 24*.* www.elca.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. CA93.06.10. 1993. Community Violence—Gun Control. Social Policy Resolution. www.elca.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. 2018. “Key gun violence statistics” www.bradycampaign.org [↑](#footnote-ref-7)