

Firearms Resolution 2003

St. Luke of Minnetonka Presbyterian Church determines and resolves as follows:

1. St. Luke of Minnetonka is “a church of Jesus Christ in the Presbyterian tradition.” From its founding, St. Luke has centered its life and practices around Jesus of Nazareth and his acts of nonviolence and hospitality as described in the Christian scriptures.

Since its earliest days, St. Luke has served as a sanctuary and hosted people from around the world who have sought refuge from war and military violence. The church’s Peace Bond program to secure peaceful resolution to conflict led to its selection by the United Presbyterian Peace Fellowship as the first congregation to be given its peacemaker award. St. Luke was an early signer of the Presbyterian denomination’s “Commitment to Peacemaking,” and the congregation has reaffirmed and expanded that commitment over the decades. The church is an active member of the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers. St. Luke extends hospitality to a nursery school, youth-serving organizations, Amnesty International, and Alcoholics Anonymous. It works with the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches Division of Indian Work to provide worship space for the American Indian community. Periodically it serves as a shelter for homeless families.

St. Luke takes seriously its baptismal vows to secure for children an environment in which a spirit of love, generosity, compassion, and forgiveness flourishes, one in which children can learn to serve others wholeheartedly and resolve conflicts nonviolently. The church is currently engaged in study around the theme “Creating a Nonviolent World,” which will be followed by the theme “Cultivating Peace: In Our Lives, in Our Homes, in Our Communities, in the World.”

2. St. Luke’s mission is not confined to the church building. During any given week, children, youth, and adults—congregants and others—engage in a variety of activities on the church grounds. From time to time the congregation gathers outdoors as a whole body or in small groups for worship, prayer, education, or fellowship. Individuals might be found meditating in the garden. Young people might be seen gathering for conversation. Nursery school children and children enrolled in after-school activities use the playground. Many families use the church parking lot to access the ball fields of an adjacent school, which means children are frequently in or near the parking lot. The church property is home to an American Indian sweat lodge, which is used regularly for worship by the Twin Cities Indian community.
3. The presence of firearms on church property seriously undermines the church’s ministries and violates St. Luke’s free exercise of religion. Therefore, St. Luke of Minnetonka Presbyterian Church hereby prohibits firearms on the church’s real property, including the church buildings, the parking lot, and the grounds, which include a sweat lodge, a natural amphitheater for worship and conversation, a garden for reflection, a wooded area, and a playground for children. The church may make an exception for peace officers on law enforcement business.
4. St. Luke will notify those on church property that firearms are prohibited. It will make such notification by posting signs that will read: “Blessed are the peacemakers. We welcome all seeking sanctuary from violence, and we therefore prohibit all firearms.”

5. St. Luke believes that the provisions of the so-called Minnesota Citizens' Personal Protection Act of 2003 (the Act) for prohibiting firearms on church property by signage, personal notification, and demanding compliance are ineffectual by intent. As a practical matter, the Act allows concealed firearms on church property until discovered. In so doing, the Act contravenes the church's mission of hospitality and nonviolence and violates the church's right to use its property in pursuit of its religious beliefs.
6. St. Luke believes that the signage requirements of the Act, which constrain the church to communicate its prohibition of firearms using specific words on a specific form of sign at specific locations, all chosen by the State, violate the church's right to use its property to communicate and exercise its religious beliefs.
7. St. Luke believes it has the right to welcome worshippers, visitors, and guests as it sees fit and to raise its children in an atmosphere of love. The personal notification requirement of the Act, which forces the church to issue a demand for compliance, violates the church's right to use its property to communicate and exercise its religious beliefs.
8. Accordingly, as the Act conflicts with the church's mission and worship practices, St. Luke of Minnetonka Presbyterian Church hereby declines to comply with the requirements of the Act.
9. St. Luke of Minnetonka Presbyterian Church joins the lawsuit commenced by Edina Community Lutheran Church to declare said Act unconstitutional as applied to the church and invites other religious organizations to join this legal action.