# Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit



BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz

## Keeping Places of Worship as Houses of Peace

This reflection comes from BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Partner Congregation pastor Laura Mayo (Covenant Church, Houston, TX) after the mass shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas.

I received an email this morning from Houston Matters (local NPR show) asking if Covenant Church planned to increase security. I responded:

We want everyone at Covenant Church to feel welcome and safe, but increasing security will not achieve this aim. The problem we face is gun violence. Gun violence is a uniquely American epidemic. Since 1968, 1.5 million people have been killed by guns in America, which is more than all of the wars in American history combined. Assault-style rifles are being used to slaughter people: Aurora: AR-15, Orlando: Sig Sauer MCX, Las Vegas: AR-15, Santa Monica Community College: AR-15, Sandy Hook: AR-15, Umpqua Community College: AR-15, San Bernardino: AR-15, Sutherland Springs: AR-15. We must change. I do not mean change the level of security at houses of worship, I mean change the way we view guns, violence, and terror. The ability of civilians to own guns designed to inflict maximum casualties is not worth 1.5 million dead people over 50 years.

At Covenant Church, we seek to follow in the peaceful ways of Jesus. In the last week of Jesus' life, he marched into Jerusalem, the seat of religious and imperial power, knowing he faced execution. As he journeyed toward Jerusalem, he stopped to weep over the city and cry, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace' (Luke 19). Can we recognize the things that make for peace? Sensible gun laws, background checks, keeping military style weapons away from people with histories of violence, at the very least, surely these are things that will make for peace. It is not pro-life to pretend that nothing can be done while innocent people are slaughtered in houses of worship, in dance clubs, schools, and movie theaters. Faith without works is dead. Are we willing to do more than offer thoughts and prayers? Are we willing to act?

I believe God uses each of us to answer prayers. God uses us. We are the answer to our thoughts and prayers. Our actions are answers. Our actions are prayers. We pray with our calls for change, we pray with our votes, we pray with our refusal to let such violence become the norm. I keep thinking of the words of Teresa of Avila: 'Christ has no body but ours, no hands, no feet on earth but ours; ours are the eyes with which Christ looks compassion on this world, ours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good.'

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## **Credits**

## Introduction

# by LeDayne McLeese Polaski, Executive Director BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz

When our friends at the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF) published their amazing and comprehensive <u>Gun</u> <u>Violence Prevention Toolkit</u>, which makes clear the magnitude of gun violence in the US and helps to turn the church toward action, I knew immediately that we should do something similar.

Luckily, the PPF is a great partner, and they eagerly agreed to allow us to take the bulk of what they'd done and create a Baptist-flavored version. So I begin with sincere thanks to our Presbyterian partners who do so much for peace rooted in justice on this and many other issues. With their slogan **Be Bold! Nonviolence Works**, the PPF makes a real and consistent difference in the cause of peace.

We thank the two pastors who created the original toolkit, Margaret Leonard and Sara Dorrien-Christians, both members of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. We thank Margery Rossi, Chair of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and Emily Brewer, PPF's Executive Director for their work to revise the original kit and for their willingness to share their work. We also thank all those who have pioneered the conversation on gun violence, all those churches and others on whose models this piece draws and seeks to enlarge.

I offer thanks to the Baptist authors and activists who have given us permission to reprint their work and many thanks to my colleague Allison Paksoy for taking on the massive job of coordinating this Baptist version.

How to use this new toolkit? Reach into the toolkit and pick the best education resources for your setting and just start! We offer print and online resources, plus films to screen in your church or community, as well as three small group options. We affirm the power of small groups of thoughtful people to explore difficult and controversial issues in ways that transform and that build community and commitment. A small group might be 30. It might be three. It might be an adult or youth group, or for Advent or Lent. Just start the conversation wherever you are. Invite the Spirit in and see where it calls you. Or start the study on your own, or with a friend or two. Pastoral and worship tools are also here for your use.

In terms of action, there are many ways to help reduce gun violence. National groups provide key leadership, and we include their information as essential. However, the real change on gun violence in America must come from local communities in every state, city and community. And guess what? That's exactly where the church of Jesus Christ is located!

Please join us in this search. We give full permission for you to re-print and make multiple copies of this toolkit for your use in churches and communities. An online version will continue to be updated in pdf format for easy printing. Send us your ideas and stay in touch through <a href="https://www.bpfna.org">www.bpfna.org</a> or <a href="https://www.bpfna.org">bpfna@bpfna.org</a>.

# Section 1 Educational Resources

## Resources Online

**Gun Violence IS Public Health** – A PowerPoint presentation by Dr. Susan L. Polan, PhD., American Public Health Association, that examines gun violence from the perspective of a growing public health crisis.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1GHDIaJ7Y7ITa70GZBhgvBqYUN1XE8VELOSN6iNdYQgU

<u>Violence</u> – A biblically-based PowerPoint presentation by Rev. Alonzo Johnson, Coordinator, Self-Development of People, PC(USA) that relates gun violence to issues of poverty and race.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hMY1hzEcPhstGFLn2-lpfa1pxQ09mvPMwmD9vCmeAxI

<u>Children & Gun Violence</u> — This article underscores the need for funding research into gun violence. A professor at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore/Albert Einstein College of Medicine documents that, in the US, 16 children per day are *admitted* to hospitals because of gun violence. That's 5,862 per year, but we have no count on how many children die of gun violence in emergency rooms or before being admitted to a hospital.

http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/04/health/children-gunshot-wounds-study/index.html

## **Films**

### Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence

A film by David Barnhart, an award-winning producer, director, and documentary filmmaker.

The documentary frames gun violence as both a disaster and a public health issue. It addresses the critical issue of gun violence prevention by moving the conversation away from the polarizing extremes that have long dominated the debate and lifting up the voice and experiences of those who seek common ground and a new way forward. *Trigger* was produced in part as a response to the 219th General Assembly (2010) resolution *Gun Violence*, *Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call* and to shed light on the growing issue. The documentary is the result of a collaborative effort of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, and the Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

There is a study guide and bulletin insert that goes along with this DVD for use in congregational or other community based meetings during screenings. For additional resources and downloads: http://www.triggerdoc.com/next/resources/



### Americans Remember the Loved Ones They've Lost to Gun Violence

The families of gun victims speak to their fellow Americans about the need for practical steps to prevent gun violence. View this short video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlHQIIavfps

### Newtown: What Remains After All is Lost?

Filming over the course of nearly 3 years, Filmmaker Kim Snyder explores a traumatized community in the aftermath of the deadliest mass shootings of schoolchildren in American history. Screened at the Sundance Festival and other international film venues, *Newtown* tells the story of resilience in the face of unspeakable tragedy.

Learn more about hosting a screening in your community at <a href="http://www.newtownfilm.com">http://www.newtownfilm.com</a>

### Changing the Conversation: America's Gun Violence Epidemic

Produced for use in high school and college classrooms and broad community settings, this film shifts the conversation from strictly Second Amendment rights to a broader focus on preventing a public health epidemic of gun violence. Purchase info at <a href="http://www.changegunviolence.com">http://www.changegunviolence.com</a>

### Making A Killing: Guns, Greed and the NRA

This film tells the stories of how guns, and the *billions* of dollars made by the gun and ammunition industry, impact the lives of everyday Americans. It features personal stories from people across the country who have been affected by gun violence, including survivors and victims' families. The film exposes how the powerful gun companies and the NRA are resisting responsible legislation for the sake of profit. It looks into gun tragedies that include unintentional shootings, domestic violence, suicides, mass shootings and trafficking – and what we can do to put an end to this profit-driven crisis.

Learn more about the film: <a href="http://www.bravenewfilms.org/makingakilling">http://www.bravenewfilms.org/makingakilling</a> Obtain a copy of the film: <a href="http://www.bravenewfilms.com/makingakilling">http://www.bravenewfilms.com/makingakilling</a>

### Raising Adam Lanza: A Documentary

In the wake of the mass killings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, FRONTLINE investigates a young man and the town he changed forever. Adam Lanza left behind a trail of death and destruction, but little else. He left no known friends, no diary. He destroyed his computer and any evidence it might have provided. His motives, and his life, remain largely a mystery. In collaboration with *The Hartford Courant*, FRONTLINE looks for answers to the central—and so far elusive—question: who was Adam Lanza?

To view the trailer or film: <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/raising-adam-lanza/">http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/raising-adam-lanza/</a>

### 2020: January 31, 2014 Young Guns - A Diane Sawyer Special

Diane Sawyer and David Muir take a sharp look at kids and guns in a special report that originally aired on Jan. 31, 2014 at 10 pm ET.

To view the special online: <a href="http://www.abc.go.com/shows/2020/episode-guide/2014-01/31-2020-131-young-guns-a-diane-sawyer-special">http://www.abc.go.com/shows/2020/episode-guide/2014-01/31-2020-131-young-guns-a-diane-sawyer-special</a>

The Inside Scoop: May 15, 2017 Host Catherine Read Interviews Presbyterian Author James Atwood on his Book, *Gundamentalism* This video offers a wide-ranging discussion of the current impact of guns in America, in conversation with James Atwood, with a special appeal to gun owners to support gun safety and reasonable gun laws. The second half of the interview features Andrew Goddard, parent of a son injured at the Virginia Tech shooting and now Director of the Virginia Center for Public Safety. He gives an excellent overview of the state of Virginia, as a case study for all 50 states.

View online at https://youtu.be/VfTSUM-6HZw

# Living Without the Sword: A Statement on Gun Violence BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz

Jesus said to Peter, those who live by the sword will die by the sword. -Matthew 26: 32

May we, who are followers of Jesus, never become accustomed to violence.

The U.S. has experienced several widely publicized outbreaks of violence that have shaken, devastated, and confounded the *American* public. Continual outbreaks of violence in Mexico threaten to crush the spirit of the people who live there. Puerto Rico suffers daily from gun related violence and death. Canada, too, has experienced publicized outbreaks of violence in recent months. This repeating brutality across the *Americas* has broken our hearts.

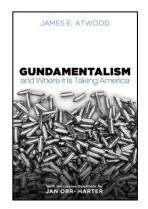
This heartbreak is added to the heartbreak of families and communities who experience death and injury every single day in less publicized events across the North American continent. When protesters are murdered by those who would devastate their lands; when innocent bystanders are killed by stray bullets as part of the "drug war;" when a returned soldier commits suicide; when jobless young people are recruited into gangs or militias and learn to practice the art of death; when countless women are terrorized or murdered by the hand they took in marriage; when moments of anger between family members end with bloodshed; when vigilantes attack those who "do not belong" in their neighborhood or country, God's heart breaks along with ours.

Too many people in too many places are dying unnecessarily. We grieve with God in these deaths: those that did and did not make the news. Joining our voices with other concerned individuals, organizations and faith communities, we declare that **enough is enough**.

We call on the governments of the nations across North America to enact, practice and encourage life-affirming measures to resolve conflict and preserve the integrity of the lives of their residents. We call on elected leaders to show courage by legislating measures that will decrease gun violence as well as every other form of violence. We call on our governments to cease their participation in the profitable but deadly international arms trade. We lift our voices against the wars, declared and undeclared, that destroy both individuals and communities, and we call on our leaders to declare a ceasefire on all forms of violence.

We call on faith communities to proclaim, teach, advocate for and practice the principles of justice with peace as proclaimed in holy writings. In so doing, we as the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America will remain prayerfully committed and faithfully active in the work of realizing the realm of peace, which we believe is the vision of God for all creation, and look forward to the day when all will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

# Study & Small Group Suggestions



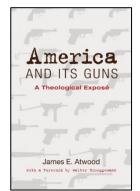
## Gundamentalism & Where It Is Taking America By James E. Atwood Discussion Questions by Jan Orr-Harter

Gundamentalism and Where It Is Taking America offers an immensely readable and comprehensive overview of the issue of gun violence in America, with discussion questions following each chapter. While written from a faith perspective, the book is designed for both church groups and a broader audience, including college, law, medical and public health schools; law enforcement agencies; local government and community groups. James Atwood is a retired

Presbyterian pastor and an avid deer hunter for half a century. During most of that time, he has been in the forefront of the faith community's fight for two constitutional rights: the right to keep and bear arms and the right to live in domestic tranquility, free of gun violence.

Atwood explains why guns mystically control so many Americans. Chapters include such topics as: How Did We Get Here?; Straight Talk to Anyone Buying a Gun for the First Time; Policing the Inner City; Can Guns be Made Safer? Atwood's book, which details his learning in a lifetime in the struggle for reasonable gun laws in America, puts dependable social and theological analysis of our unique national epidemic into your hands along with scientific data that will provoke honest reflection and discussion for the building of a safer and saner America. Along with the discussion questions, suggestions for action are also included.

To purchase the book: http://wipfandstock.com/gundamentalism-and-where-it-is-taking-america.html



## America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé by James E. Atwood Foreword by Walter Brueggemann Six Session PPF Study Guide by Jan Orr-Harter

James Atwood, an avid hunter, cautions that an absolute trust in guns and violence morphs easily into idolatry. Having spent 40 years as a Presbyterian pastor fighting against the easy access to firearms, one of which took the life of a friend, he uses his unique experience and his biblical and theological understanding to graphically portray the impact guns have on our society. He documents how Americans have been deceived into believing that the tools

of violence will provide ultimate security, whether they take the form of advanced military technology or a handgun in the bedside stand. He closes with a wake-up call to the faith community, which he says is America's best hope to unmask the extremism of the Gun Empire. This book will appeal primarily to persons of faith

because it brings together multiple aspects of the gun death crisis in America –the statistics, the laws, the players, the options--- with the underlying spiritual and theological imperatives of what is often considered to be a "hands-off" political issue. Available at <a href="http://www.amazon.com">http://www.amazon.com</a> in print and Kindle or with the publisher's group discounts. Call 541-344-1528 or order from <a href="http://wipfandstock.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=America+and+its+guns">http://wipfandstock.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=America+and+its+guns</a>

See the next page for the PPF Six Session Study Guide for this book.

Rev. James Atwood, *right*, speaks and conducts workshop for groups across the nation. See media coverage with Jim at

https://youtu.be/VfTSUM-6HZw

Contact: James Atwood, 1236 Glenside Dr. Harrisonburg, VA 22801 540-568-8523 jatwood1959@gmail.com



## Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Study Guide in Six Sessions for

# America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé by James Atwood

Suggestions for studying this book in a church small group setting:

The group convener can be one person or can be rotated. The convener's role is to start and end the meeting, to ask the suggested questions, to move discussion forward and to make sure that everyone in the group is heard fairly. Each session opens with a question for each person to answer. Thereafter, just take turns. Everyone may not wish to address every question. Sessions will be about 90 minutes each. Group size can be 4-12 persons. If larger, divide into two groups. Suggested group field trip: a gun show in your community.

### 1. Session One - A Call to Conversation Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (read beforehand)

Convener welcomes everyone, opens with prayer and invites each person to introduce themselves by answering: 1. How do you feel about entering into a discussion about gun violence? Have guns impacted your life, family, friends?

- 2. On p. 14 Atwood writes that "Gun violence is no more a political issue than drunk driving, selling crack cocaine or arson." How do we Americans determine the issues we will discuss and those we will avoid? How does <u>not</u> talking about gun violence impact the "peace, unity and purity of the church?"
- 3. On p.19 a National Rifle Association (NRA) executive said: "You would get a far better understanding of the NRA if you were approaching us as one of the great religions of the world." Is there, or has there ever been, something in your life that has served as an idol? Why would an NRA leader make such a statement?
- 4. On p. 20-21 Atwood lists indications of possible gun idolatry. Do you agree or disagree? Can a person of faith serve two masters—that is, can we claim another ultimate value in addition to loving God and neighbor?
- 5. Share a passage in these chapters that especially spoke to you—and why?
- 6. Chapter 4 covers efforts to find common ground to reduce gun violence over 4 decades and asks the question, "Can the church bring gun rights and public safety zealots together in the same space to start an honest conversation?" Is this study group such a conversation? Who needs to be in the same space to discuss this in your community/state?
- 7. On p. 18 Atwood writes, "What our nation needs is balanced legislation that respects two fundamental constitutional rights: the right to keep and bear arms and the right to enjoy domestic tranquility as one pursues life, liberty and happiness." Are there other examples in American life of "balanced legislation" or a balanced approach to difficult issues or competing rights?

Convener asks a group member to close the meeting with prayer. Homework: Read chapters 5, 6, 7

### 2. Session Two - Violence Chapters 5, 6, 7

- 1. Convener opens with prayer and asks: Do you agree with Atwood that violence as entertainment helps us to see gun violence as normal? Do you personally enjoy violence as entertainment? Do others in your family? Why?
- 2. Chapter 5 discusses children and guns. Make a gun with your thumb and finger and shoot it to kill everyone in the group, saying, "You're dead!" Did you do this as children? Did/do your children? How does it feel to do it as an adult?
- 3. Look at the phrases on p. 45-47. Do you hear yourself or your loved ones in these expressions?

- 4. Atwood states that the violent language of some politicians and talk show hosts has abetted both gun violence and the militia groups who target law enforcement as "foot soldiers of the federal government." Do you agree or not? Why?
- 5. See the Appendix on p. 227-228 and update it with: Iraq War Deaths 2003-2009: 4,400 and US gun deaths 2003-2009: 202,500 (p.194). Does anything surprise you in these numbers? Were you aware that gun deaths have been above 30,000 per year for decades? Why is this high level of civilian gun death so peculiarly American?
- 6. Describe in your own words what is meant by the phrase "redemptive violence," p. 63-66. Give examples.
- 7. If violence is part of our American DNA, what does that suggest to you about gun violence prevention efforts? What does it suggest to you about the purpose of the church in the United States today? Convener asks a group member to close the meeting with prayer. Homework: Read Chapter 8, 9, 10

### 3. Session Three - The Principalities & Powers Chapters 8, 9, 10

- 1. Convener opens by reading Ephesians 6:12 and asks everyone: Each person give one word that describes the "principalities and powers" (King James Version) that Paul addresses.
- 2. Is the absence of sensible gun laws in America related to the Principalities and Powers? What is relation between these spiritual and earthly powers? Have you ever experienced these powers in relation to guns?
- 3. With any smart phones, search for images of "Jesus with assault weapon" and share. What is at the root of a human desire to attribute the blessing of guns and violence to God? Does anything in these chapters make you angry?
- 4. Do you agree that US racial-ethnic diversity is one reason some people feel a need to acquire a gun? (p. 92)
- 5. Did the marksman and sporting era of the NRA (1871-1976) play a role in your family history? Were you aware of its change of focus since 1977 and the Cincinnati Revolt? Why is the NRA so successful at promoting gun sales?
- 6. Atwood documents that the oft-repeated "20,000 gun control laws on the books" is untrue. Why does it persist?
- 7. Have you faced up to a significant fear in your life? Why is fear so powerful? How did faith help you face up to fear?
- Convener asks someone to read Ephesians 6:10-20. Close with open prayer. Homework: Read Chapters 11, 12, 13

### 4. Session Four - The Impact of Idolatry Chapters 11, 12, 13

- 1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: Do you have concerns about guns and the children and youth in your life? Have you done anything about this? Why or why not?
- 2. Were you surprised at the high rate of gun violence and deaths among those with concealed carry permits? Were you surprised about the statistics on gun suicide? (p. 111) Does anything else surprise you in these chapters?
- 3. Can you describe the sense of identity and power that guns appear to convey? Can you identify with or have you experienced the "prison" of violence in poor urban neighborhoods? What is the connection between guns and identity?
- 4. How can we better help veterans who return home transformed by violence? Who else suffers from PTSD?

- 5. How do you react to Atwood's suggestion that the cost of unfettered gun access is a form of human sacrifice—"between 82 and 84 Americans, ten of whom are children and youth under 18, are killed every day by guns?" (p. 128) This book was published months before the Newtown, CT killings. Has Newtown, CT changed you in any way?
- 6. Any other items you wish to discuss from the book so far? Convener reads Exodus 20:2-3 and asks a member to close with prayer. Homework: Read Chapters 14, 15, 16 and the gun sellers' voluntary "Code of Conduct" at www.heedinggodscall.org

### 5. Session 5 - Our Gun Laws Today & Our Impact Abroad Chapters 14, 15, 16

- 1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: How do you interpret the Second Amendment and its role today?
- 2. If left unencumbered, what is the NRA's vision for America? Where are they trying to take us? Are we there yet?
- 3. In the 50 laws and policies in Chapter 15, do any seem justifiable? Which do you see as most dangerous? Why?
- 4. Should states continue to have the option to withhold information on mental illness in background checks?
- 5. Define a "straw purchase." What steps could change the gun show and gun dealer culture to reduce gun violence?
- 6. How can the US church best respond to the appeal from the Presbyterian Church of Mexico? (p. 181)
- 7. Do you share Atwood's vision for *moving the mountain of gun violence*, listed at the end of p. 168? Why or why not?

Convener asks everyone for a word to describe where they are now with the issue of gun violence, closing with prayer. Homework: Read chapters 17, 18, 19. Find out how many gun shows and licensed gun dealers operate in your state.

### 6. Session 6 - The Spiritual Alarm Clock--Will We Wake Up? Chapters 17, 18, 19

- 1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: What did you learn about gun shows and dealers in our state?
- 2. How have you or others in your community responded to local gun violence or national mass shootings?
- 3. Why are so many NRA members silent on their support for responsible gun laws and adequate law enforcement?
- 4. In stopping the Senate compromise on expanding background checks (April 2013), did the gun empire overreach?
- 5. What in Bob Ricker's story impresses you? Can you see yourself or anyone you know in his story? (p. 200-202)
- 6. Share anything in this group study experience that has changed your views on gun violence.
- 7. What are the risks if your church moved from words to action for responsible gun laws? Of not doing so?
- 8. Where, if at all, do you see God in the crisis of gun violence in America? Are there other issues to discuss?
- 9. Is this our last meeting or should we do something? Discuss possible next steps and make a plan. Convener thanks all for participating, closes with open prayer and a benediction.

## Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Gun Violence Curriculum

## A Five Session Study

This Curriculum was created by Rev. Margaret Leonard, with revisions in 2017 by the PPF Gun Violence Prevention Working Group. It gives an overview of the gun violence issue without the need for participants to read a book. There are several aspects of gun violence prevention not covered by this study, such as access to guns by children, gun accidents, guns and domestic violence and the economic motivation of the gun and ammunition industry. Look for future additions to the Curriculum.

<u>Gun Death Story</u> - For Sessions 1-4, the leader or another member of the group will tell a Gun Death Story to discover the name and personal story of a recent gun victim. The goal is to put a human face on their gun death statistic. To prepare each Gun Death Story, bring a news clipping about a recent local gun-related death <u>and/or</u> select a national story from the news site that lists daily gun violence across America, trying to pull out details about who this person was, their life and their relation to others.

See <a href="http://www.newser.com/tag/22994/1/gun-violence.html">http://www.newser.com/tag/22994/1/gun-violence.html</a>

**Documentation** - Documentation sources cited here on gun violence go back several years. In recent years, the National Rifle Association and its congressional allies have been successful at cutting off funding for research into the data and causes of gun violence, threatening agencies with even further funding cuts if they pursue this research. Into this vacuum of information, several new non-profit research groups are being launched by universities, hospitals and others. This new data will become available in the years ahead.





### Session 1

## **Gun Violence 101 & The Citizen's Test**

## Goals & Objectives:

To explore the issue of gun violence in America, becoming more aware of it as a problem, and discerning how our faith community may be called to address it.

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- studied national gun violence statistics.
- named initial unease or concerns with the issue.
- identified how it has touched us individually or communally.

Setting	Adult Christian Education For	Adult Christian Education Forum, small group or committee meeting		
Materials	Candle Match A Gun Death Story Computer w/internet connection	Citizen's Test on Gun Violence in America Paper Pen/Pencil Bibles		

### **Opening**

- Share a Gun Death Story and light a candle in memory of this person.
- Lead the group in this or your own prayer:

Holy God, we come together today to learn more about our world and your presence in it. We ask that you be with the families and friends of (naming people about whom we have just read). We pray also for the perpetrators, broken people, just like ourselves. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your light in the midst of this pain and darkness. Amen.

• **Read** Romans 12: 9-21.

### **Presenting & Exploring**

#### • Watch video:

"Americans Remember the Loved Ones They've Lost to Gun Violence" <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlHQJIavfps">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlHQJIavfps</a>

• **Take the Citizen's Test.** Go over the answers together.

**Lead the group in discussion**, going around the room to answer the following questions.

—Note: allow a moment of silence after each question is asked so that all may have the opportunity to consider their answers. It is okay for the discussion to veer from these specific questions as the Spirit leads.—

- o What, if anything, makes you nervous about this topic?
- o Where do you think that nervousness comes from?
- o How has gun violence touched your life? Has it hit close to home? When was the first time you remember hearing about gun violence? Do you think that experience has shaped your view or perception of gun violence?
- O Do you think this is an appropriate topic for churches to discuss? Why or why not?

### Closing

- **Reread** Romans 12: 9-21.
- **Invite the participants to reflect** on what they've learned and how they feel called to move forward in the coming week.
- **Name** a time to come back together for further discussion.

### • Close with prayer:

God, may your life-giving Spirit move through us and inspire us. It is hard to hear about the suffering of our world. We know that you promise a better life, a better way of being together. Help us to find hope in the midst of such sadness and hear your call to action. Amen.



# CITIZEN'S TEST ON GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

(Revised, 10/2016)

1.	Campaign, and gu	n violence preventio letermined to ban al	*	the country are opposed to hun	,
2.		ttle in all US wars sin	, 0	own country than all servicem	en and
3.	The annual overall a. \$876 million		ence for the US econo n c. \$50.4 billio	omy is: on d. \$229 billion	
4.	Today, 16 years aft and explosives.		possible for those on False	the FBI's "no fly list" to legally	buy guns
5.	Each year, a. 10,000		by guns in the US. c. 50,000	d. 33,000	
6.	The most frequentla. handgun	, .	on is a: c. shotgun	d. knife	
7.	Americans in what a. South	·	own the most firearms c. West	? d. Northeast	
8.	The highest homicia. South	de rates per 100,000 b. West	population are in the c. Midwest	d. Northeast	
9.	b. a person wit	e likely to be murder quaintance, or family th a criminal record. another race or relig	member		
10.	. The Second Amen firearm with no res	0	G	en citizens the right to own an	y type of
			is times more like used in a crime than t c. 11	ely to be used in a murder, accido stop an intruder. d. 22	dental
12.	checks on all guns s		∕₀ of all gun owners a	nd NRA members support back	ground
	a. 10%	b. 25%	c. 50%	d. 80%	

13. The Consumer Pr piece of ammuniti	•	nmission is prohibite	ed by law from exami	ning the safety of any gun or
proce or annual	True		False	
14. A majority of gun		=		
			False	
15. 60% of crime gun		• 0 0	_	
a. 25%	b. 10%	c. 50%	d. 5%	
16. The NRA has con	nsistently supported True		ureau of Alcohol, Tob False	pacco and Firearms.
17. The United States	s is the Number 1 True		guns to countries arou False	nd the world.
, -	a constitutional rig	_ <u> </u>	-	nd other political events ernment, should it become
,	True		False	
•	s have some form o		and Laws which gives	the right to use a gun
	True		False	
hit their targets wl	hat percent of the	time?		als or public offenders, they
a. 50%	b. 45%	c. 18%	_ d. 72% _	



# ANSWERS AND SOURCES FOR CITIZEN'S TEST Updated October, 2016

- 1. False: These entities never express opposition to hunting, sports shooting, or gun ownership. Our mission is to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people. We do advocate for a ban on assault weapons and large magazine clips.
- True. Center for Disease Control. National Vital Statistics Report and the U.S. Department of Defense. See also www.politifact.com; Mark Shields of PBS; and Congressional Research Services, America War and Military.
- 3. D. \$229 billion. Follman, Mark. "The True Cost of Gun Violence to America." *Mother Jones*. April 15, 2015. See also *Gun Violence: The Real Costs*, by Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, Oxford Press, 2000. In 2000 the documented cost was \$100 billion.
- 4. False. Individuals on the FBI's Terrorist Watch List can legally buy firearms from licensed dealers, as long as they can pass the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) database. If they cannot pass, they can buy guns from private sellers in more than 40 states and at 5,000 gun shows throughout the country.
- 5. D. Each year, more than 33,000 people are killed by guns in the U.S. More than half the deaths are by suicide. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS tool, <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html">http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html</a>
- 6. A. Handgun. FBI, 2008 Uniform Crime Report, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8, <a href="http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/offenses/expanded\_information/data/shrtable\_08.html">http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/offenses/expanded\_information/data/shrtable\_08.html</a> Firearms: 67.8 %; Knives or other cutting instruments: 13.4%; Personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.): 5.7%; Blunt objects (clubs, hammers, etc.): 3.9%; Other dangerous weapons: 9.2% Read more at <a href="http://www.snopes.com/politics/guns/baseballbats.asp#yfu69YHjIpULbRHM.99">http://www.snopes.com/politics/guns/baseballbats.asp#yfu69YHjIpULbRHM.99</a>
- 7. A. South—followed by the West. "Guns in America: Results of a Comprehensive National Survey on Firearms Ownership and Use," Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, 1996, https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Cook-et-al.-1996-Guns-in-America.pdf
- 8. South. The highest percentage of murder rates are in the South, with Louisiana as #1 in the country. FBI, 2013 Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States by State, <a href="https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/tables/5tabledatadecpdf/table\_5\_crime\_in\_the\_united\_states\_by\_state\_2013.xls">https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/tables/5tabledatadecpdf/table\_5\_crime\_in\_the\_united\_states\_by\_state\_2013.xls</a> The most dangerous state in the US is Louisiana; the most dangerous city for African Americans is Omaha, NE.
- 9. A. a friend, acquaintance or family member. . 2014 FBI Uniform Crime Report, Expanded Homicide Data Table 10, <a href="https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide">https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide</a>
- 10. False. The Supreme Court in 2008 interpreted the Second Amendment as an individual right, overturning 200 years of judicial history. Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for the 5-4 majority stated, "Like most rights, the Second Amendment right is not unlimited. It is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose: For example, concealed weapons prohibitions have been upheld under the Amendment or state analogues. 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." <a href="http://www.scotusblog.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/07-290.pdf">http://www.scotusblog.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/07-290.pdf</a>
- 11. C. 22 times. Lengthy studies indicate every time a gun in the home was used in a self-defense or legally justifiable shooting, there were four unintentional shootings, seven criminal assaults or homicides, and 11 attempted or completed suicides. Cited by Rowen, James. "Guns in Homes Pose Greater Risk to Families than Intruders, Data Shows." *Milwaukee Journal*. December 20, 2012.
- 12. D. 80% of NRA members and 87% of non NRA members regard these and other measures as complementary, not contradictory to their second amendment rights. "Gun Owners Poll" Frank Luntz-Republican Pollster, July, 2012.
- 13. True. CPSC can regulate teddy bears and toy guns, but not real firearms and ammunition. Consumer Products Safety Act, 1972.
- 14. False. A recent North Carolina study of gun owners indicated 43% did not use trigger locks or safely store weapons. (*ABC News*, May 1, 2015.) 40 % of gun owners keep their guns loaded and unlocked at all times. A 2005 study showed 73% of children under 10 living in homes with guns know the location of their parent's guns. A frequent result of unsecured weapons is suicide.
- 15. D. 5% of licensed dealers engage in gun trafficking, accept straw purchasers, hire nefarious personnel and lose thousands of guns every year out the back door.
- 16. False. For decades, the NRA drafts legislation to decrease the regulatory authority, budget, and manpower of the ATF. e.g. In 1972, ATF had 2,500 agents charged with inspecting 60,000 dealers. An inspection is likely every 8 years. Agents are still at 1972 levels for the entire nation while the NYCPD has 35,000 officers for the city.
- 17. True. "Setting the Record Straight: The UN and Small Arms," *New York*, June 26-July 7, 2006, and William Hartung and Rachel Stohl, "Hired Guns", *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2004. As guns and small arms are placed in the hands of vindictive militias and child soldiers, even if the country should side with us in "our global war on terror," the already high death rates of women and children in those regions escalate even further.
- 18. True. Increasing numbers of "insurrectionist" gun owners carry their guns as a show of force. The CEO of the NRA, Wayne LaPierre, declares, "The people have a right to take whatever measures are necessary, including force, to abolish oppressive government." At the 2009 Conservative Political Action Conference he added, "The guys with the guns make the rules."
- 19. True. Thirty three states support the Castle Doctrine. One is not obliged to retreat if one's home is attacked. Most states have expanded the law to assert a person has no duty to abandon a place where he has a right to be. These laws have given birth to a shoot-first-ask-questions-later mindset.
- 20. C. 18 %. An analysis, published in 2006 by the Rand Center on Quality Policing at the request of Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, (NYC) found that in the years 1998-2006, the average hit ratio for officers involved in a shooting where the subject does not fire back was 30 percent. During a gunfight, where the target is shooting at officers, the study reported that the hit rate falls to just 18 percent. (Dahl, Julia. "Empire State Building Shooting Sparks Questions About NYPD Shot Accuracy". *August 29, 2012. CBS News.* NYC)

Special Thanks to James Atwood for creating The Citizen's Test.

### Session 2

## Guns in the USA Today & "Battleground America"

## **Goal & Objectives:**

To understand the evolving relationship of the American public to guns today.

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- explored the historical and contemporary interpretations of the Second Amendment.
- considered implications of gun policy on our community.
- thought about how the role of guns has changed in our society.

Setting	Adult Christian Education	Adult Christian Education Forum, small group or committee meeting		
Materials		copies of "Battleground America" summary*PaperPen/Pencil cipants to read the article before you meet. m/magazine/2012/04/23/battleground-america		

### **Opening**

- Share a Gun Death Story and light a candle in memory of this person.
- Lead the group in this or your own prayer: Holy God, we come together today to learn more about our world and your presence in it. We ask that you be with the families and friends of (naming people about whom we have just read). We pray also for the perpetrators, broken people, just like ourselves. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your light in the midst of this pain and darkness. Amen.
- **Read** Isaiah 58:1-12.

### **Presenting & Exploring**

- **Introduce** the article "Battleground America," asking who had a chance to read it, stating its author and where it was printed (Jill Lepore, printed in *The New Yorker* on April 23rd, 2012), and explaining that the following points for discussion are taken directly from it. (All points are direct or paraphrased quotes.)
- **Pass out** the summary of the article so each participant has a copy.

Going around the room, ask for volunteers to read each point.

- **Discuss** *The New Yorker* **article**, "Battleground America" by answering the following questions as a group (a summary of the article is included should someone have forgotten to read it):
  - —Note: allow a moment of silence after each question is asked so that all may have the opportunity to consider their answers. It is okay for the discussion to veer from these specific questions as the Spirit leads.
    - o Did anything in this article surprise you?
    - o How aware have you been of society's shift in attitude regarding gun control?
    - o Do you think anything was represented unfairly?
    - O Does the article change your understanding of the issue? Why/why not?
    - **o** Why do you think this issue is not discussed freely among friends, family, or in church?

### Closing

- **Reread** Isaiah 58:1-12.
- **Invite the participants to reflect** on what they've learned and how they feel called to move forward in the coming week.
- **Name** a time to come back together for further discussion.
- End the group in this or your own prayer: God, may your life-giving Spirit move through us and inspire us. It is hard to hear about the suffering of our world. We know that you promise a better life, a better way of being together. Help us to find hope in the midst of such sadness and hear your call to action. Amen.



# A Short Summary of **BATTLEGROUND AMERICA**

One Nation, Under the Gun

By Jill Lepore, The New Yorker, April 23, 2012

### The Second Amendment

The Second Amendment: "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

### **Demographics**

- There are nearly 300 million privately owned firearms in the United States: 106 million handguns, 105 million rifles, and 83 million shotguns. That works out to about one gun for every American."
- T.J. Lane, the teenager who killed his classmates at Chardon High, found the gun he used in his grandfather's barn. It belonged to his uncle.
- The United States is the country with the highest rate of civilian gun ownership in the world. "The second highest is Yemen, where the rate is nevertheless only half that of the U.S."
- Men are far more likely to own guns than women are, but the rate of gun ownership among men has fallen since 1980 while it has remained the same for women in the same stretch of time....Gun ownership is higher among whites than blacks, higher in the country than in the city, and higher among older people than among younger people.
- In many states, to purchase a gun from a licensed dealer you need a permit, which requires you to complete firearms-safety training. People who buy guns from private sellers at gun shows or through other private exchanges aren't required to take a firearms-safety class. These exchanges fall under what is called the "gunshow loophole."
- 40% of the guns bought in the United States are bought from private sellers, not licensed dealers.
- Arms are military weapons. A firearm is a cannon that you can carry as opposed to artillery so big and heavy that you need wheels to move it, or people to help you...the firearms used by a well-regulated militia (at the time the Second Amendment was written) could be discharged only once before they had to be reloaded.
- The Second Amendment was drafted by James Madison in order to assure the Anti-Federalists that the people would have the right to form a militia. The original version read: "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; a well armed and well regulated militia being the best security of a free country: but no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms shall be compelled to render military service in person."
- None of this (the debate over the Second Amendment) had to do with hunting. People who owned and used long arms to hunt continued to own and use them...As Garry Wills once wrote, "One does not bear arms against a rabbit."

### America's Evolving Relationship to Guns

• Firearms have been regulated in the United States from the early days. "Laws banning the carrying of concealed weapons were passed in Kentucky and Louisiana in 1813, and other states soon followed: Indiana (1820), Tennessee and Virginia (1838), Alabama (1839), and Ohio (1859). Similar laws were

passed in Texas, Florida, and Oklahoma. As the governor of Texas explained in 1893, the 'mission of the concealed deadly weapon is murder. To check it is the duty of every self-respecting, law-abiding man.'"

- Although the laws were occasionally challenged, they were rarely struck down in state courts.
- The National Rifle Association was founded in 1871. For most of its history, the NRA was chiefly a sporting and hunting association.
- The first major federal gun control legislation pieces were the 1934 National Firearms Act and the 1938 Federal Firearms Act. Taken together, they created a licensing system for dealers and prohibitively taxed the private ownership of automatic weapons. The NRA supported both.
- In 1939, The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the 1934 act, unanimously agreeing with solicitor general Robert H. Jackson that the Second Amendment is "restricted to the keeping and bearing of arms by the people collectively for their common defense and security."

### The Modern Gun Debate

- Gun-rights arguments have their origins not in 18th century Anti-Federalism but in 20th century liberalism. They are the product of what the Harvard law professor Mark Tushnet has called the "rights revolution," the pursuit of rights, especially civil rights, through the courts.
- In the 1970's, the NRA began advancing the idea that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual's right to carry a gun, rather than the people's right to form armed militias to provide for the common defense.
- Fights over rights are effective at getting out the vote. Describing gun-safety legislation as an attack on a constitutional right gave conservatives a power at the polls that, at the time, the movement lacked.
- Ronald Reagan was the first Presidential candidate whom the NRA endorsed. His election made it possible for conservatives to begin turning a new interpretation of the Second Amendment into law.
- Orrin Hatch became the chair of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, and commissioned a history of the Second Amendment, which resulted in a 1982 report, "The Right to Keep and Bear Arms." The authors of the report claimed to have discovered "clear—and long-lost—proof that the Second Amendment was intended as an individual right of the American citizen to keep and carry arms in a peaceful manner, for protection of himself, his family, and his freedoms."
- In 1986, the Firearms Owners Protection Act was passed, repealing parts of the 1968 Gun Control Act (passed largely in response to the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.) and giving new legal authority to the NRA's interpretation of the Second Amendment, and a growing body of scholarship funded by the NRA.
- Chief Justice Warren Burger said that the new interpretation of the Second Amendment was "one of the greatest pieces of fraud, I repeat the word 'fraud,' on the American public by special-interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime."
- Between 1968 and 2012, the idea that owning and carrying a gun is both a fundamental American freedom and an act of citizenship gained wide acceptance and, along with it, the principle that this right is absolute and cannot be compromised; gun-control legislation was diluted, defeated, overturned, or allowed to expire; the right to carry a concealed handgun became nearly ubiquitous.

For the entire article, see http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/04/23/battleground-america

### Session 3

## **Illegal Gun Sales**

## **Goals & Objectives:**

To explore the issue of illegal gun sales, specifically becoming familiar with the practice of "straw purchasing."

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- learned how guns are illegally traded in the US.
- reflected on our relationship to the illegal gun market.

Setting	Adult Christian Education For	Adult Christian Education Forum, small group or committee meeting		
Materials	Candle Match Gun Death Story Computer w/internet connection	Copies of <i>Straw Purchasing</i> handout Paper Pen/Pencil Bibles		

### **Opening**

- Share a Gun Death Story and light a candle in memory of this person.
- Lead the group in this or your own prayer:

Holy God, we come together today to learn more about our world and your presence in it. We ask that you be with the families and friends of (naming people about whom we have just read). We pray also for the perpetrators, broken people, just like ourselves. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your light in the midst of this pain and darkness. Amen.

• **Read** Matthew 26:36-52.

### **Presenting & Exploring**

- **Ask the group:** Have you noticed violence in our community differently than you did before our discussion last week? How do you feel about the presence of guns in our communities?
- Watch one of these videos: Lost and Stolen-A Documentary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xdw3Ttzrmw&feature=related

OR

• Think Again: Straw Purchasing
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKNVGxtU0-0

### **Review** the *Straw Purchasing* handout below

- **Lead the group in discussion**, going around the room to answer the following questions, allowing a moment of silence after each question is asked so that all may have the opportunity to consider their answers. It is okay for the discussion to veer from these specific questions as the Spirit leads.
  - o Was there anything that surprised you in the video or handout?
  - o For what purposes are unregulated guns needed?
  - o For what purposes are guns needed to be bought in bulk?
  - **o** What is our relationship to gun violence in the community, and specifically the illegal sales of guns?

### Closing

- **Reread** Matthew 26:36-52.
- **Invite the participants to reflect** on what they've learned and how they feel called to move forward in the coming week.
- **Name** a time to come back together for further discussion.
- End the group in this or your own prayer: God, may your life-giving Spirit move through us and inspire us. It is hard to hear about the suffering of our world. We know that you promise a better life, a better way of being together. Help us to find hope in the midst of such sadness and hear your call to action. Amen.



## Straw Purchasing Handout

The International Association of Chiefs of Police has called for US legislation that would help stop illegal gun trafficking, which is accomplished in part through straw purchases.

What is "straw purchasing?"

A straw purchase is an illegal firearm purchase where the actual buyer of the gun, being unable to pass the required federal background check or desiring to not have his or her name associated with the transaction, uses a proxy buyer who can pass the required background check to purchase the firearm for him/her.

The straw purchasing cycle is the most common way that guns are trafficked and sold to individuals who are restricted from owning them. According to a 2000 report, "nearly 50



**Courtesy of Francois Polito** 

percent of ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) investigations involved firearms being trafficked by straw purchasers either directly or indirectly."<sup>1</sup>

So what's the big deal?2

"Virtually every crime gun in the United States starts off as a legal firearm," according to then-Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) director Bradley Buckles in 2000.<sup>3</sup>

In a 1997 report, the ATF looked at how guns then "pass through the legitimate distribution system of federally licensed firearms dealers" before ending up in the hands of criminals. The ATF concluded, in part, that, "there is a large problem of diversion to the illegal market from licensed gun establishments."

When a gun is recovered in a crime, the ATF can use the serial number on the gun to trace back to where it first left the legal market - tracing from the first sale of the firearm by an importer or manufacturer, to the wholesaler or retailer, to the first retail purchaser. In some cases, that first retail purchaser is the link between the legal and illegal markets.<sup>5</sup>

Looking at trace information from 1998, the ATF found that "a small group of dealers accounts for a disproportionately large number of crime gun traces."

More than 85 percent of dealers in the U.S. had no crime guns traced to them at all in 1998, while about 1 percent of licensed firearm dealers accounted for 57 percent of traces that same year. The ATF also concluded that "sales volume alone cannot be said to account for the disproportionately large number of traces associated with those dealers."

Guns get from dealers to criminals in part through trafficking. "ATF's trafficking investigations show that trafficked firearms are diverted to prohibited persons and are subsequently used in serious crimes," according to an ATF report.

In trafficking investigations between 1996 and 1998, 25 percent involved guns used in an assault and 17 percent involved guns used in homicides. Nearly 5 million Americans were victims of violent crimes committed with firearms between 1993 and 2005. 11

The ATF examined gun-trafficking investigations from July 1996 to December 1998 and found that 46 percent of trafficking investigations during this period involved straw purchasers. This was nearly double the percentage of the next closest source. (Gun: Enforcing Federal Law Against Firearms Traffickers. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000).

### **Our Security is Connected**

Advocates for gun violence prevention actions should acknowledge regional differences in gun usage and gun violence prevalence. Many guns used on the streets of cities were originally purchased in rural areas. Similarly, illegally sold guns frequently flow across state lines as well. Gun sales in one area can affect gun violence in others. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." Even if we do not see this activity, we must stand with those in our community who suffer.

### Footnotes:

- 1 Department of Justice Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. *Following the Gun: Enforcing Federal Laws against Firearms Traffickers*, June 2000.
- 2 The information in this section comes directly from Mayors Against Illegal Guns report, "Inside Straw Purchasing: How Criminals Get Guns Illegally," April 2008.
- 3 Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives. *Following the Gun: Enforcing Federal Law Against Firearms Traffickers*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000
- 4 Department of Justice Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. *A Progress Report: Gun Dealer Licensing and Illegal Gun Trafficking* (1997).
  - 5 Department of Treasury Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. *ATF Snapshot* 2007. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2007.
  - 6 Department of Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. *ATF Regulatory Actions: Report to the Secretary on Firearms Initiatives*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000.
  - 7 Department of Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. *Commerce in Firearms in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000.
  - 8 Department of Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. A*TF Regulatory Actions: Report to the Secretary on Firearms Initiatives*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000.
  - 9 Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives. *Following the Gun: Enforcing Federal Law Against Firearms Traffickers.* Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000.
- Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives. *Following the Gun: Enforcing Federal Law Against Firearms Traffickers*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000. (Percentages do not total to 100 because some investigations involved guns used in multiple types of crimes)
- 11 Department of Justice. "Nonfatal Firearm-related Violent Crimes, 1993-2005." DOJ. <a href="http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/tables/firearmnonfataltab.htm">http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/tables/firearmnonfataltab.htm</a> Department of Justice. "Homicide trends in the U.S." DOJ.
- Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives. *Following the Gun: Enforcing Federal Law Against Firearms Traffickers*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Treasury, 2000. This was the only comprehensive study of its kind.

### STRAW PURCHASING—the short version

### STEP 1:

Illegal arms dealer seeks out someone with a clean record to make firearms purchase in their stead. This buyer is called the "straw purchaser."

### STEP 2:

Illegal arms dealer provides the straw purchaser with money, both to pay for the firearms and their services.

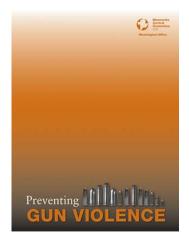
#### STEP 3:

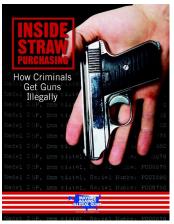
The illegal arms dealer sells the guns to individuals who would not otherwise be able to buy weapons legally.

### STEP 4:

When guns used in a crime are traced back to a straw purchaser, they claim the guns were lost or stolen. In some states, this gets them off the hook and they are able to continue supplying guns to the underground market.

### More Resources for Further Study:





**Preventing Gun Violence**, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office <a href="https://mcc.org/media/resources/609">https://mcc.org/media/resources/609</a>

*Inside Straw Purchasing*, Mayors Against Illegal Guns https://everytownresearch.org/reports/inside-straw-purchasing-criminals-get-guns-illegally/

## Session 4

## **Guns and Suicide**

## Goals & Objectives:

To explore the issue of suicide, especially the relationship between guns and suicide.

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- learned about suicide demographics, influences, and prevention techniques.
- discussed the taboo topic from a faith and pastoral perspective.
- reviewed suggestions for limiting access to lethal means of suicide.

Setting	Adult Christian Education Forum, small group or committee meeting		
Materials	CandleMatchGun Death StoryComputer w/internet connection	Copies of the suicide handouts Pen/Pencil Bibles	

### **Opening**

- Share a Gun Death Story and light a candle in memory of this person.
- Lead the group in this or your own prayer:

Holy God, we come together today to learn more about our world and your presence in it. We ask that you be with the families and friends of (naming people about whom we have just read). We pray also for the perpetrators, broken people, just like ourselves. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your light in the midst of this pain and darkness. Amen.

• **Read** Romans 14: 7-9.

### **Presenting & Exploring**

• Watch the video: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUzzyyG0H08">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUzzyyG0H08</a>

- **Review** the National Suicide Statistics handout and the article on "Limiting Access to Lethal Means" from the Brady Campaign.
- **Lead the group in discussion**, going around the room to answer the following questions. Allow a moment of silence after each question so that all may have the opportunity to consider their answers. It is okay for the discussion to veer from these specific questions as the Spirit leads.

- •Did you ever think that you would talk about the issue of suicide in church? Why or why not?
- •Was there anything that surprised you in the video or the readings?
- •Have you had any personal connections to this topic?
- •What emotions are stirred up for you when talking about the issue of suicide?
- •How do you think theologically about this issue?
- •What does good care look like for the friends and family of someone who committed suicide?
- •Often suicides are committed with a gun that still has its price tag, just purchased. With half of all suicides committed with a gun, suicide prevention could be the greatest result of universal background checks, waiting or "cooling off" periods and closing the gun show loophole. How does this impact your thinking about gun regulations?

### Closing

- **Reread** Romans 14: 7-9.
- **Invite the participants to reflect** on what they've learned and how they feel called to move forward in the coming week.
- **Name** a time to come back together for further discussion.
- End the group in this or your own prayer: God, may your life-giving Spirit move through us and inspire us. It is hard to hear about the suffering of our world. We know that you promise a better life, a better way of being together. Help us to find hope in the midst of such sadness and hear your call to action. Amen.



## National Suicide Statistics

## Figures from the National Center for Health Statistics.

- Over 36,000 people in the United States die by suicide everyyear.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 18 and 65 years in the United States.
- Currently, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.
- A person dies by suicide about every 15 minutes in the United States.
- Every day, approximately 101 Americans take their own life.
- Ninety percent of all people who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.
- There are four male suicides for every female suicide, but three times as many females as males attempt suicide.
- There are an estimated 8-25 attempted suicides for every suicide death.

### Firearms and Suicide

While murders, accidents and mass murders are visible through the news, suicide is often not reported. According to the Brady Campaign, there are 20,000 gun suicides in the U.S. every year, more than 50 every single day. That's more than half of all suicides. *It's also two-thirds of all gun deaths*. Preventing gun suicide is probably the area where reasonable gun regulations can make the most difference.

Research shows that a gun in the home makes a suicide three times more likely than for homes without guns. There are a few reasons why the presence of a gun in the home is a risk factor for suicide. First is the surprising impulsivity of many suicide attempts. Guns are also so much more lethal than other methods. Most people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide. But because guns are so effective, only one in 10 people who attempt suicide by gun get that second chance.

Limiting easy access to a gun for someone who considers or even attempts suicide can literally be the difference between life and death. And, in addition to the loss of life, suicide deaths impact the future of families, especially children.

- There are 20,000 gun suicides in the U.S. every year, more than 50 every single day.
- Although most gun owners reportedly keep a firearm in their home for "protection" or "self-defense," 83 percent of gun-related deaths in these homes are the result of a suicide, often by someone other than the gun owner.
- Firearms are used in more suicides than homicides.
- Death by firearms is the fastest growing method of suicide.
- Firearms account for over 50 percent of all suicides.
- Only some states require a waiting period between purchase and acquisition of a firearm, but
  making it a federal requirement would decrease gun suicides nationwide, as well as the ability to
  cross state lines to obtain a gun in suicide crisis. Defeating mandatory waiting periods is a key
  legislative goal of the National Rifle Association.

### Youth

- Suicide is the sixth leading cause of death among those 5-14 years old.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those 15-24 years old.
- Between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s, the suicide rate among U.S. males aged 15-24 more than tripled (from 6.3 per 100,000 in 1955 to 21.3 in 1977). Among females aged 15-24, the rate more than doubled during this period (from 2.0 to 5.2). The youth suicide rate generally leveled off during the 1980s and early 1990s, and since the mid-1990s has been steadily decreasing.
- Between 1980-1996, the suicide rate for African-American males aged 15-19 has doubled.
- Risk factors for suicide among the young include suicidal thoughts, psychiatric disorders (such as depression, impulsive aggressive behavior, bipolar disorder, certain anxiety disorders), drug and/or alcohol abuse and previous suicide attempts, with the risk increased if there is situational stress and access to firearms.

#### **Older Adults**

- The suicide rates for men rise with age, most significantly after age 65.
- The rate of suicide in men 65+ is seven times that of females who are 65+.
- The suicide rates for women peak between the ages of 45-54 years old, and again after age 75.
- About 60 percent of elderly patients who take their own lives see their primary care physician within a few months of their death.
- Six to nine percent of older Americans who are in primary care settings suffer from major depression.
- More than 30 percent of patients suffering from major depression report suicidal ideation.
- Risk factors for suicide among the elderly include: a previous attempt, the presence of a mental illness, the presence of a physical illness, social isolation (some studies have shown this is especially so in older males who are recently widowed) and access to means, such as the availability of firearms in the home.

### **Depression**

- Over 60 percent of all people who die by suicide suffer from major depression. If one includes alcoholics who are depressed, this figure rises to over 75 percent.
- Depression affects nearly 10 percent of Americans ages 18 and over in a given year, or more than 24 million people.
- More Americans suffer from depression than coronary heart disease (17 million), cancer (12 million) and HIV/AIDS (1 million).
- About 15 percent of the population will suffer from clinical depression at some time during their lifetime. Thirty percent of all clinically depressed patients attempt suicide; half of them ultimately die by suicide.
- Depression is among the most treatable of psychiatric illnesses. Between 80 percent and 90 percent of people with depression respond positively to treatment, and almost all patients gain some relief from their symptoms. But first, depression has to be recognized.

### Alcohol and Suicide

- Ninety-six percent of alcoholics who die by suicide continue their substance abuse up to the end of their lives.
- Alcoholism is a factor in about 30 percent of all completed suicides.
- Approximately 7 percent of those with alcohol dependence will die by suicide.

### **Medical Illness and Suicide**

- Patients who desire an early death during a serious or terminal illness are usually suffering from a treatable depressive condition.
- People with AIDS have a suicide risk up to 20 times that of the general population.
- Studies indicate that the best way to prevent suicide is through the early recognition and treatment of depression and other psychiatric illnesses.

# Limiting Access to Lethal Means

## from The Brady Campaign

For Footnote Citations and the Complete Article, see "The Truth about Suicide and Guns," The Brady Campaign <a href="http://www.bradycampaign.org/the-truth-about-suicide-guns">http://www.bradycampaign.org/the-truth-about-suicide-guns</a>

...The research presented thus far convincingly demonstrates that ready availability of a firearm increases the likelihood of suicide. <sup>66,67,68</sup> Given this stark connection, making firearms less available would seem to be a logical strategy for prevention. Since many suicides are impulsive, separating someone from the means to self-harm takes away their ability to act on what otherwise might have been a fleeting impulse. <sup>69,70,71,72</sup> Suicidal crises are often triggered by an immediate stressor, such as the loss of a job or the breakup of a relationship. <sup>73,74,75</sup> However, the urge to act is fairly short-lived, typically lasting a few minutes to a few hours. <sup>76</sup> That's why delaying access to a gun is critical; it allows time for the suicidal impulse to pass without being realized.

However, the urge to act is fairly short-lived, typically lasting a few minutes to a few hours. That's why delaying access to a gun is critical; it allows time for the suicidal impulse to pass without being realized.

Intervention during this time of acute risk is key to saving lives. Most people who attempt suicide don't really want to die, they are just so overwhelmed by their emotions they feel unable to cope.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the vast majority of people who make it through a suicidal crisis do not go on to die by suicide. A systematic review of 70 studies following patients after a non-fatal attempt found that, on average, only 7 percent (range: 5 to 11 percent) eventually died by suicide, whereas 70 percent did not attempt again.<sup>78</sup>

People have told us that if Arlyn had not taken the gun, she could have killed herself another way. That's possible. It's also possible that the delay as she looked for another way would have given her mind time to move out of the suicidal trance she was in at the moment. That lost opportunity took away our chance to help and save her."

—KARYL, ARLYN'S MOTHER



A common misconception is that people who want to die will find a way to kill themselves, with or without a gun. However, studies suggest that the risk of method substitution is low. If a person's preferred suicide method is unavailable, it is unlikely they will switch to a different one.<sup>79</sup> Even if another method is used it is likely to be less lethal, thus increasing the odds of survival.<sup>80</sup>

Reducing access to the methods people use to kill themselves can save lives. Research shows that making lethal suicide means less available or less deadly, leads to decreases in suicide rates by that method and, in some cases, lowers overall suicide rates as well.<sup>81,82</sup>

Studies have documented substantial decreases in method-specific suicide rates following firearm regulation, detoxification of domestic gas, construction of barriers at jumping sites, mandatory use of catalytic converters in vehicles, modifications in drug packaging and toxicity, and restrictions on pesticides.<sup>83</sup> In fact, suicide rates have been shown to decrease by as much as 30 to 50 percent. Means reduction is more likely to impact overall suicide rates if the method is highly lethal and makes up a substantial portion of suicide deaths.<sup>84</sup>

One of the earliest examples comes from the detoxification of domestic gas in England and Wales in the 1960s and early 1970s. Researchers found that reductions in the carbon monoxide content of domestic gas were followed by dramatic decreases in suicides by that method, while overall suicide rates decreased by approximately one-third.<sup>85,86</sup>

In a systematic review of suicide interventions, an international panel of experts found that means reduction was one of only two approaches with proven effectiveness.<sup>87</sup> In the United States, the potential impact of means reduction is greatest for strategies involving firearms, which are the leading cause of suicide death.<sup>88</sup> Means reduction encompasses a broad range of interventions that can occur on a population or on an individual level. Population-based approaches include policies designed to regulate the distribution and safe storage of firearms. At the individual-level, means reduction is targeted at specific groups or individuals. Strategies can include health education and promotion in the form of mass media campaigns and individual counseling by healthcare providers.

Research has shown that reducing firearm availability can lead to reductions in firearm suicide rates. <sup>89,90,91,92</sup> In one study, researchers measured the impact of changes in household firearm ownership on suicide rates in the United States between 1981 and 2002. They found that each 10 percent reduction in firearm prevalence was associated with significant declines in rates of firearm suicide (4.2 percent) and overall suicide (2.5 percent). The effect was even greater among children ages 0 to 19.<sup>93</sup> A more recent study of suicide on college and university campuses between 2004 and 2009 revealed substantially lower suicide rates for students compared to all 20- to 24-yearolds. These differences were attributed to the nine-fold decrease in firearm availability on campuses versus homes. <sup>94</sup>

Much of the available research on means reduction initiatives targeting firearms has focused on legislation. In 1976, legislation was passed regulating the purchase, sale, and possession of handguns in Washington, DC. Adoption of the law was associated with a prompt 23 percent decline in firearm suicide rates, with no corresponding changes in rates of non-firearm suicide. Moreover, no declines were seen in adjacent areas of Maryland or Virginia, where legislation had not been passed. A decrease in suicide rates among persons 55 and older was seen following passage of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, which required purchasers to undergo a background check and, for a few years, specified a five-day waiting period for firearm purchases. Ferromagnetic production of the purchase of the production of the purchase o

In a recently published study, researchers found lower rates of suicide by firearm, as well as lower overall suicide rates, in states with restrictive firearm laws (e.g., background checks on all gun sales, mandatory waiting periods, safe storage requirements) compared to those with few restrictions. Although this study yielded some preliminary findings, the analysis may be flawed because it only partially accounted for potential compounders.<sup>97</sup>

Limiting access to firearms has been shown to reduce suicide rates in many countries outside the U.S., including Australia, 98 Canada, 99 Israel, 100 and New Zealand. 101 A study of the Israeli Defense Forces found that a change in policy, requiring firearms to be stored on base while soldiers took their weekend leave, resulted in a 40 percent decrease in suicide. Much of this decrease could be attributed to the policy change since the weekday suicide rate did not change significantly. 102 Following a 1996 firearm massacre in which 35 people were killed, additional regulations were passed that made gun laws stronger and more uniform across Australia. The reforms included a ban on semi-automatic and pump-action rifles and shotguns, a national gun buyback program, registration of all guns, and background checks on all gun sales. Researchers found that the new gun laws accelerated the rate of decline for suicide by firearm, doubling it from 3 percent to 7.4 percent per year. 103

Suicide is a complicated issue that requires a comprehensive approach. Most suicide prevention efforts focus on identifying those at risk and treating the underlying issues that lead to suicidal thoughts and behavior. However, the enormity of the problem and the complex interplay between risk factors make it difficult to predict who will actually attempt suicide and when. That's why it is so important that suicide prevention efforts focus not only on why people take their own lives, but the ways in which they attempt suicide as well.



## Session 5

## Action: What Does the Lord Require of Us?

## **Goals & Objectives:**

To explore options for action as a church community.

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- learned about several action proposals with Presbyterian roots.
- evaluated which action/s, if any, seems best for your context.
- discussed a plan for next steps, schedule and responsibility for follow up.

Setting	Adult Christian Education Forum, small group or committee meeting		
Materials	CandleMatchCopies of the GA 2014 Action(read beforehand)	copies Toolkit "Take Action!" section 3 Pen/Pencil Bibles	

### **Opening**

- **Light a candle** to represent the presence of Christ in the room with you
- Lead the group in this or your own prayer:

Holy God, we come together today to look to you in helping us respond to what we have learned about gun violence. We ask you to be with us as we seek a first step and we thank you for one another as a community living in your name. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your light pointing our way. Amen.

• Read John 21: 15-19.

### **Presenting & Exploring**

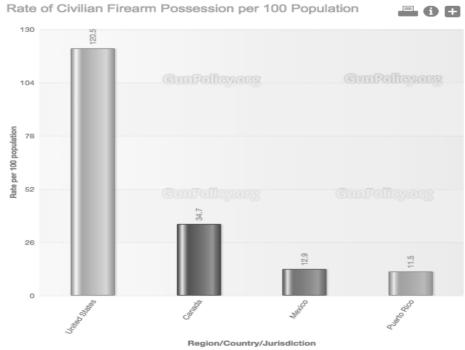
- **Review** the action ideas offered by the General Assembly in 2014 in *On Gun Violence Prevention* and the PPF toolkit **Section 3, Take Action!**
- **Lead the group in discussion**, giving everyone a chance to participate. It is okay for the discussion to veer from these specific questions as the Spirit leads.
- Can someone summarize the No Guns in God's House Sign Project? What would be pros and cons of proposing this idea in your church? What steps would be needed?
- Can someone summarize the Offering of Letters Worship Service Project? What would be pros and cons of proposing this idea in your church? What steps would be needed?
- Also review the Case Studies for Oak Park, Stony Point Presbyterian Churches and Elizabeth Presbytery. Do these examples give you any ideas?

- What other ideas for action have occurred to you? Do/could your particular elected officials play key roles?
- Discern if one idea seems to rise above other ideas for helping your church or community act to prevent gun violence. What initial steps are needed? By whom?
- Do you need to meet again? When? If you plan to meet again, try to discover who, if anyone, in your community is already working on this? What are they doing? Who might join in your effort? Review the contacts for national and local groups before you meet again.

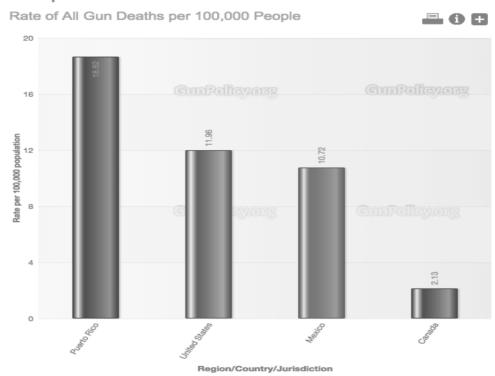
**Closing** Invite each participant to lift up in a prayer of gratitude for what they most appreciated in this study experience. Close by singing *The Doxology*.



# Gun Policy Comparisons in BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz Member Countries



As each total or rate is from the most recent published survey, years may vary. To view the source data and survey period, or to match years exactly, follow the hover links on each bar



As each total or rate is from the most recent published survey, years may vary. To view the source data and survey period, or to match years exactly, follow the hover links on each bar

### Firearm Regulation - Guiding Policy







United States	The regulation of guns in the United States is categorised as permissive <sup>1</sup>
Canada	restrictive III
Mexico	restrictive III
Puerto Rico	restrictive II

### Right to Possess Firearms







United States	In the United States, the right to private gun ownership is conditionally guaranteed by the US Constitution, <sup>1</sup> as limited by federal law. <sup>2</sup> For similar local rights, see each state.
Canada	is not guaranteed by law
Mexico	is conditionally guaranteed by the Constitution, as limited by statute law $\; \square \;$
Puerto Rico	is conditionally guaranteed by the US Constitution, as limited by federal law and state law $\ \square$

### Gun Ownership and Possession







United States	In the United States, non-prohibited persons of minimum ${\rm age}^{1\ 2\ 3}$ may lawfully acquire, possess or transfer a firearm or ammunition
Canada	only licensed gun owners
Mexico	only registered gun owners
Puerto Rico	only licensed gun owners

### Licensing Records







United States	In the United States, authorities do not maintain a record <sup>1</sup> of individual civilians permitted to acquire, possess, carry, sell or transfer a firearm or ammunition
Canada	maintain a record
Mexico	maintain a record
Puerto Rico	maintain a record

### Civilian Gun Registration







United States	In the United States, the law does not require 1 2 3 4 that a record of the acquisition, possession and transfer of each privately held firearm be retained in an official register
Canada	requires (for prohibited and restricted firearms only) $\ \Box$
Mexico	requires U
Puerto Rico	requires 🗓

### Gun Dealer Record Keeping







United States	In the United States, licensed firearm dealers are required 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 to keep a record of each firearm or ammunition purchase, sale or transfer on behalf of a regulating authority
Canada	are required
Mexico	are required
Puerto Rico	are required

### Regulation of Private Gun Sales







United States	In the United States, the private sale and transfer of firearms is $\mbox{permitted}^{1\ 2\ 3}$
Canada	permitted for non-restricted firearms and prohibited, without authorisation from the chief firearms officer, for restricted or prohibited firearms $\ \Box$
Mexico	prohibited without an extraordinary permit $\ \square$
Puerto Rico	prohibited unless conducted and registered by a licensed firearm dealer $\ \Box$

### Regulation of Dealer Gun Sales







United States	In the United States, dealing in firearms by way of business without a valid gun dealer's licence is unlawful 2 3
Canada	is unlawful
Mexico	is unlawful
Puerto Rico	is unlawful

#### Background Checks for Private Gun Sales







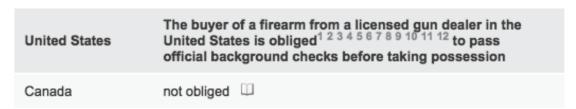
United States	The buyer of a firearm in a private sale in the United States is not obliged $^{1\ 2\ 3\ 4\ 5}$ to pass official background checks before taking possession
Canada	not obliged

(Data for Mexico and Puerto Rico was unavailable)

#### Background Checks for Dealer Gun Sales







(Data for Mexico and Puerto Rico was unavailable)

#### Waiting Period for Gun Possession







United In the United States, the minimum wait for a lawful firearm States purchase to be completed is undetermined 1 2 28 days on first application for a licence, but none for subsequent Canada acquisitions U undetermined III Mexico

(Data for Puerto Rico was unavailable)

#### Carrying Guns Openly in Public







United States	In the United States, carrying a firearm in plain view in a public place is allowed with or without a permit depending on the jurisdiction, and prohibited in others <sup>1</sup>
Mexico	is prohibited U
Puerto Rico	is prohibited III

(Data for Canada was unavailable)

### Penalty for Illicit Firearm Possession







United States	In the United States, the maximum penalty for unlawful possession of a firearm <sup>1</sup> is 10 years in prison <sup>2</sup>
Canada	five to 10 years in prison 🛄
Mexico	three years in prison and seven years in prison for illegal carrying
Puerto Rico	five years in prison



### Statements & Responses

#### A Statement Against Gun Violence The Gathering of the Alliance of Baptists in Austin, Texas on April 14, 2012

The Mission Statement of the Alliance of Baptists commits us to "Work for peace."

From the Campaign to Stop Gun Violence:1

- Every day in the United States, approximately 300 people—including 65 children and teens—are injured or killed with guns in murders, assaults, suicides, and accidents;
- Among high-income countries, the United States accounts for 80% of all firearm deaths—including 86% of women killed by firearms, and 87% of all children up to age of 14 killed by firearms;
- Gun violence disproportionately affects minority populations. For example, from 2005–2007, the firearm homicide rate among males ages 10–24 years was highest for African-Americans with 55.5 deaths per 100,000 population. The next highest rate was for Latinos (17.3);
- Gun violence drains our country of \$100 billion every year in medical, criminal justice, and security costs;
- An estimated 40% of U.S. gun sales occur without a criminal background check. Requiring background checks on *all* private sales of firearms can help reduce illegal gun trafficking;
- While the Supreme Court has held that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to keep and bear arms, the Court has also said that "prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill" are both reasonable and constitutional.

#### From Heeding God's Call: <sup>2</sup>

- The gun violence that has resulted in more than 40,000 deaths and untold injuries in Mexico is being committed using guns that flow virtually unimpeded by state and federal gun laws from gun shops on the United States side of the border.
- These guns are purchased in bulk in the Southwest by those who profiting by transferring them to Mexican drug gangs. These stand-ins for drug traffickers are called 'straw buyers'.
- The practice of straw buying is done all across our country, but is especially prevalent and damaging in the Southwest, where many gun retailers are content to irresponsibly or corruptly sell guns in volume to straw purchasers. These are the guns used to threaten, wound, maim and kill across the border.

As people of faith:

www.heedinggodscall.org

<sup>1</sup> www.csgv.org

- We embrace Dr. Martin Luther King's hope for peace and safety in our communities:
- We resist apathy to this epidemic of violence, because fear, closed doors, and separation will not end it.
- We unite to bring God's vision of a peaceable kingdom.

We encourage Alliance of Baptists members and congregations to discern how God may be calling us to reduce gun violence in our own home communities.

• One opportunity for our members and congregations is to join *Heeding God's Call*—a faith-based and grassroots movement. Another opportunity is to join in the work of the *Coalition to Stop Gun Violence*, a coalition of 48 national organizations working to reduce gun violence. The *Coalition to Stop Gun Violence* includes religious organizations, child welfare advocates, public health professionals, and social justice organizations.<sup>3</sup>

We—the Alliance of Baptists—add our organizational voice in support and endorsement of *Heeding God's Call's* efforts on the US/Mexico border to stop straw purchasing from taking place, by using moral, religious and public suasion to pressure gun shops to adopt a Code of Conduct intended to make the leakage of guns from any adopting gun shop far less likely.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, we—the Alliance of Baptists—believe it is a moral imperative to reduce death and injury from gunfire and endorse comprehensive and effective public policy measures such as those recommended by the International Association of Chiefs of Police Association and other experts. Today we endorse these efforts along with other members of the *Coalition to Stop Gun Violence*:

- Keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals and those with serious mental illness by closing gaps in the background check system, including requiring criminal background checks for all gun sales;
- Supporting policies that enhance law enforcement's ability to combat the flow of illegal guns into our communities and enforce existing gun laws;
- Supporting new technologies to help law enforcement more effectively trace crime guns and supporting development of safety features to childproof guns;
- Encouraging local efforts to prevent and reduce gun violence;
- Urging firearms retailers to implement protocols aimed at preventing "straw purchases" and the sales of firearms to prohibited purchasers;

Fostering research to advance the public's understanding of gun violence victimization and gun violence prevention.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America is a coalition member of the *Coalition to Stop Gun Violence*. <sup>4</sup> *Heeding's* Code of Conduct is identical to the Responsible Firearms Retailer Partnership between Walmart, our nation's top seller of firearms, and Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a coalition of more than 600 mayors from across the country. The Code is a set of 10 non-burdensome business practices which, if followed, would severely diminish straw buying from gun stores and, consequently, the availability of guns to Mexican drug gangs and their straw buyers at said stores.

### A Statement from ABC Metro New York

### Report of the Public Mission Committee To the Board of Directors Tuesday, March 19, 2013

As people of faith and citizens of the United States, it is essential that American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York be among those religious communions calling for social policies and raising a collective consciousness that interrupts and brings to an end the senseless episodes of gun violence.

Toward this end, the members of the Public Mission Committee met and identified the high incidence of firearm-related injuries and death as a social justice issue of increasing concern and a priority worldwide public health issue. After reviewing much research, the committee identified the following:

#### The Situation

Throughout the world, gun violence is killing masses of people. In the United States alone, there is an estimated 223 million firearms. <sup>1</sup>Approximately one out of every three households owns a handgun. <sup>2</sup> The risk of handgun violence to children and youth is more prevalent in the United States today than in any previous generation. <sup>3</sup> Neighborhoods, schools, and homes are overexposed to the threat of increasing numbers of privately owned guns pose including suicide, homicide and accidents. The development of an armed society does not enhance public security; it only increases the possibility that further tragedies will continue. <sup>4</sup>Shootings in Aurora, Oak Creek, Tucson, Fort Hood, Virginia Tech, Columbine and Sandy Hook are just the latest incidents of gun violence.

Since Robert Kennedy died in Ambassodor Hotel in June 4, 1968, more Americans have died from gunfire than all the wars of this country's history, from the revolutionary war to the Civil War, from War World I to War World II. <sup>5</sup>Every day, in the United States, approximately 300 people, including 65 children and teens, are injured or killed with guns. This number includes murders, assaults, suicides, and accidents. An estimated 40 percent of these guns are sold without a criminal background check. Many are purchased at gun shows and in other venues which do not require these checks. <sup>6</sup>

Additionally, recent research by "Mayors Against Illegal Guns" reveals that a full twenty percent of mass shootings, (defined by the FBI as any single incident in which four or more people are killed with a gun) committed since 2009, involved the use of either a high-capacity magazine or an assault weapon. According to FBI data and media reports, 43 mass shootings- nearly one per month - took place between January 2009 and January 2013 in 25 different states. Nine percent of these mass shootings occurred in schools. Assault weapons or high-capacity magazines were used in 12 of these shootings, resulting in an average of 15.6 people shot per shooting. That is 123 percent more than in other incidents. In addition, shootings involving assault weapons or high-capacity magazines resulted in 54 percent more deaths than in other shootings. <sup>7</sup> Clearly the prevalence of the private ownership of such weapons is part of the problem as well.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> United Methodist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> United Methodist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> United Methodist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> United Methodist

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> PBS – Mark Shields

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org

http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/f8/9/1098/1/mass shootings 2009-13 - jan 29 12pm.pdf

#### The Issues

- 1. Second Amendment Rights: Perhaps more than any other nation, firearms are a part of the history, identity and culture of the United States. Many people see it as an important symbol critical for survival. We need to be sensitive to the way in which our understanding of the right to keep and bear arms has developed over time as an integral part of our nation's emergence. The Second Amendment to the Constitution guarantees an individual right to "keep and bear arms." The Supreme Court has upheld this right. However, they have also made it clear that this right is "not unlimited." This is not unusual. It is inherent in our social contract that the individual liberties we enjoy must always be balanced against the common good. No personal freedom can be so broadly construed that it is allowed to interfere with the right and mandate of our society to preserve human life. Gun ownership is no exception. Therefore, while we must respect the personal rights of hunters and other private gun owners to legally own firearms, we must also insist that the laws that govern this gun ownership make sense and serve to protect human life wherever possible.
- **2. The Need for Safe Communities:** A critical concern for people of faith in America is the safety of our communities. Gun violence is a major threat to that safety. Therefore, we must consider anything that has been demonstrated to be effective in reducing that violence. Reducing the trafficking of illegal weapons is one way to do that. Recent research conducted by "Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence" has revealed that background checks for private gun sales have reduced illegal gun trafficking within states that employ them by 48 percent while strong, enforced gun dealer licensing laws have reduced illegal gun trafficking within states that employ them by 64 percent.<sup>9</sup>
- **3. The Connection Between Gun Violence and Domestic Violence:** As is the case with most forms of violence, gun violence is not only something that happens between strangers. It is also deeply connected with the intimate violence that plagues far too many of our families. The "Mayors Against Gun Violence" research 10 revealed a noteworthy connection between mass shooting incidents and domestic violence. In at least 17 of the cases (40%), the shooter killed a current or former spouse or intimate partner. At least 6 of those shooters had a prior domestic violence charge. Therefore, if we are going to take action to reduce gun violence, we will need to consider the larger social problem of intimate violence as well.
- 4. The Connection Between Gun Violence and Mental Health Problems: Something else to consider is the relationship between gun violence and mental health problems. It seems self evident that emotionally disturbed people should not have access to firearms. However, our laws appear to be ineffective in preventing them from doing so. In the previously mentioned report from "Mayors Against Gun Violence" <sup>11</sup> 4 of the 43 incidents (9%) they researched included evidence that concerns about the mental health of the shooter had been brought to the attention of a medical practitioner, school official or legal authority prior to the shooting. Nonetheless, these shooters were not prohibited from owning or accessing firearms.
- **5. Our Culture of Violence:** We need to consider the social, political and economical realities that create an environment where youth in our inner cities see guns as a necessary tool of survival. Guns that were designed for military use overseas have found their way into the hands of youth seeking to protect themselves at all costs. Not only in inner cities; but, throughout the country, violence is widely accepted and normalized in our culture. Video games, movies, television shows, advertising media and more is chock full of violent imagery. The American Psychological Association tells us that exposure to media violence does

11 Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> District of Columbia versus Heller

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org

<sup>10</sup> http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/f8/9/1098/1/mass\_shootings\_2009-13\_- jan\_29\_12pm.pdf

increase aggression. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, any comprehensive approach to the problem of gun violence will need to take this into account.

**6. Economical Profit and Costs of Guns:** 2012 was a banner year for the country's 5,400 firearms manufacturers and its 129,817 federally licensed firearms dealers, not to mention its unquantifiable number of assorted salesmen, importers, brokers, pawn shop owners, traders and collectors. In 2012, the U.S. gun industry racked up \$11.7 billion in sales and \$992 million in profits on some 5.5 million manufactured and 3.5 million imported weapons. The FBI recorded more than 16.8 million background checks for gun purchases this year, a record high. In fact, the firearms industry has been one of the U.S. economy's brightest spots through the recent years of general downturn. Coinciding with the Great Recession, the 2008 election of Barack Obama began a national surge in gun sales that had a \$27.8 billion impact on the country's economy in 2009 because of job creation, gun sales and tax levies. In 2011, that impact was \$31.8 billion. Gun industry-related jobs grew by more than 30 percent between 2008 and 2011, and since 2008, profits have risen 140 percent for Smith and Wesson, alone.

The gun industry employs over 200,000 people. It pays out about \$9.8 billion in annual wages. And it contributes more than \$5 billion in federal and state taxes every year.

Are there any unhealthy numbers lurking in the shadows? Well, perhaps these:

- There are about 310 million privately owned guns in America, a country with a population of 315 million.
- Between 2003 and 2010, 247,131 Americans died of gunshot wounds
- In 2011 there were 11,101 gun-related murders, nationwide.
- Since 1982, the country has witnessed 61 mass shootings.
- On Dec. 14, a semi-automatic gun and rifle-toting madman murdered 20 children in Newtown. They were all between 6 and 7 years old.

#### **Theological Rationale**

Gun ownership is a discipleship and stewardship issue. Baptist believe that God has created every person with a free will and conscience and that no ecclesiastical authority or government agency can impose upon our right to choose; therefore, every person must give an account to God for how we manage all that has been entrusted into our care. Each person of faith has the responsibility to wrestle with God as to what role and function a gun has in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ and how this helps or hinders our witness of God.

We understand that humanity has been created in the image and likeness of God. Genesis 1:26 (NRSV) reads "God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." Each human being carries that divine imprint with her or him. Believing that all human life is part of the sacred image of God, we are invited by God to do all that we can to prevent anything that threatens that life, including needless gun violence.

Furthermore, our scripture and tradition tells us that God holds all accountable for perpetrating violence and injustices. For instance, the prevalence of violence is cited in Genesis 6:11-13 (NRSV) as a primary reason for the flood. ("Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to

<sup>12</sup> http://www.apa.org/research/action/protect.aspx

Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth." This is but one example among many where divine judgment is made upon those complicit to sustaining violent cultures. As people of faith, we need to push back against our culture of violence.

Finally, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are taught that the way we treat the most vulnerable members of our society is the way we treat God. We read, for example, in Matthew 25:40 that God will tell us one day "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Surely victims, and potential victims, of gun violence whether it happens on our streets or other public places, in our schools, or in our homes, are among the "least of these" who we are called to treat the same way we would treat God.

By taking action to reduce gun violence in our country we are intervening and seeking to preserve the sanctity of life. In the end, God's last word to us is a word of life and death. Let us choose life.

#### The Recommendation

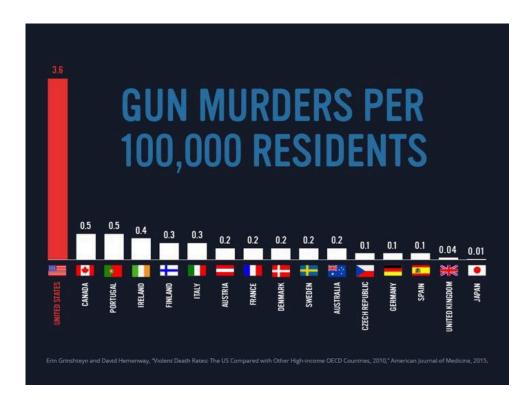
Therefore, we recommend that our local churches support and advocate for the following measures:

- Ban assault weapons and prohibit the sale of large capacity ammunition magazines
- Close the gaps in the background check system, including a requirement for criminal background checks for all sales at gun shows
- Strengthen the regulation of gun dealers and purchasers, including universal background checks, better record keeping of gun transfers, and better reporting of lost or stolen guns
- Repeal statutory restrictions that hamper the ability of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) to combat illegal gun trafficking
- Develop new technologies to help law enforcement more effectively trace crime guns and develop safety features to childproof guns
- Encourage local efforts to prevent and reduce gun violence
- Urge firearms retailers to implement protocols aimed at preventing the sale of firearms to prohibited purchasers via "straw purchases" to third parties
- Improve the National Violent Death Reporting System
- Restore firearms research funding for the Center of Disease Control and Prevention
- Strengthen record keeping of gun transfers
- Make gun trafficking a federal crime
- Improve mental health services
- Encourage greater social attention to the problems of mental illness
- Address cultural issues regarding the pervasiveness of violence in entertainment and the media.

Please call your Senators and Representatives today at 1-888-897-0174, identifying your name, city, and church affiliation. Then register this action at <a href="http://faithscalling.org">http://faithscalling.org</a> so that there will be a record that we, in the Metropolitan New York Region, took a stand on this important issue.

# Is an attack on one an attack on all? The brutal consequences of our nation's gun fetish

by Ken Sehested, founding director of BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz (Originally published on Ken's blog Prayer & Politiks (http://www.prayerandpolitiks.org)



We are a nation awash in guns, increasingly inured to violence that doesn't happen on our street or zip code or time zone, and increasingly addicted to militarized response to threat at home and, especially, abroad. The recent shooting of legislators in a public park, of those practicing for a charity baseball game, could be a teachable moment in how we might disentangle ourselves from these deathly habits.

#### Will it?

I wish I were more hopeful that lessons will be learned, penitence declared, restoration initiated, communal bonds recovered. People of faith, however, know that hope's foundation lies deeper than present circumstances permit, however unfavorable.

You know the aphorism: What you see depends on where you stand. A slightly more sophisticated way of saying it might be: What you see depends on your personal "risk factor" and your "boundary of relevance."

Those are terms journalists know, along with an inherited tradition of careful thought in deciding newsworthiness. [1] "If it bleeds, it leads" still determines much of the news cycle—not unlike the way we are entranced, at least momentarily, by a car crash scene; or the way the tongue keeps returning to a newly-broken tooth—even though countless courageous, truth loving journalists wish it otherwise. (The skyrocketing number of journalists killed in conflict regions is testimony to the savage ransom demanded by desperate rage. [2] Here's an example of a newsworthiness decision. On the same day of the Alexandria shooting, a more deadly rampage

erupted in San Francisco, at a United Parcel Service facility, when a disgruntled employee killed three of his coworkers, wounded two others, before committing suicide.

Unfortunately, in the calculus of real world journalism—given the concentration of press surrounding our nation's governing institutions—the San Francisco tragedy drew the short straw. Risk factors and boundaries of relevance prevail.

Ponder for a moment our current political climate when it comes to the risks of refugees and guns.

"In the four decades between 1975 and 2015," wrote columnist Nicholas Kristof, "terrorists born in the seven nations in Trump's travel ban killed zero people in America. In that same period, guns claimed 1.34 million lives in America." [3]

Including this week's tally, 154 mass shootings (defined as four or more people wounded or killed per incident) have occurred in the US—just since the start of the year. Which means we're averaging 6.7 per week.[4]

The risk factors shrink, and the boundaries of relevance constrict. The stock market and sales flyers catch our eyes. Outrage fatigue sets in. Consider, for instance, the fact that, just this year, more than 3,100 civilians have been killed by US air strikes in Iraq and Syria.[5] It's very hard to stretch our boundaries that far, to faces we've never seen and voices we've never heard, in circumstances far beyond our horizon. The risks and relevance don't register.

After the 2012 massacre of school children in Newton, Ct., Shannon Watts, a stay-at-home mother of five children, began organizing mothers to speak out against gun violence. "I was wholly unprepared for the blowback headed my way," she writes this week in the Washington Post.[6]

"Within hours of speaking out about our nation's lax gun laws, I received threats of sexual violence and death . . . my phone throbbed with angry texts and calls. I started getting letters mailed to my home—complete with cutouts from magazines to spell out threat to my life.

Her email was hacked; her Facebook photos were distributed publicly; her phone number and home address were shared online; her children's social media accounts were hacked and the names of their schools shared online.

"Just weeks ago," she writes, "a meeting of Moms Demand Action volunteers in a Kentucky public library was crashed by men who openly carried guns, waltzed in and sat in the front row."

In November 2015, Dallas, Tx., Mayor Mike Rawlings was asked to discuss the political controversy over admitting Syrian refugees to the US. He told MSNBC News, "I am more fearful of large gatherings of white men that come into schools, theaters and shoot people up, but we don't isolate young white men on this issue." [7]

Our nation's gun fetish, and its lethal consequences, is abundantly documented. US citizens own nearly half the globe's privately owned guns. [8] Our gun-related murder rate is 25 times higher than 22 other high-income nations. Though our population is less than half the total of those other countries, gun deaths in the US account for 82% of the combined number. [9]

Nevertheless, the House of Representatives is currently considering a loosening of gun regulations (under the specious title "Sportsmen's Heritage Protection Act"), including a provision to legalize gun silencer sales, under the subheading of "Hearing Protection Act." Columnist Dana Wilbank comments, "That's like calling

legislation that expands the availability of machine guns the 'Carpal Tunnel Protection Act' because it spares would-be shooters the repetitive motion of trigger pulling." [10]

In case you need a sobering reminder, it was almost exactly this time a year ago that Sen. Rand Paul tweeted, "Why do we have a Second Amendment? It's not to shoot deer. It's to shoot at the government when it becomes tyrannical!"

With many of you, I was inspired by House Leadership Paul Ryan's dramatic plea for unity. "We are united in our shock. We are united in our anguish. An attack on one is an attack on all of us." [11] Obviously, both the risk factor and the boundary of relevance were on full display in our capitol and its environs.

But if that eloquent appeal to our commonweal—to shared risk and mutual relevance—is to have any meaning, it must be backed by corresponding public policy as well as personal behavior. We must create a culture of peace, not just its slogans and piety. Truth's consequences will not be mocked.

"Only those who do the truth," Jesus said, "come to the light." (John 3:21) Can I get a witness?

#### ©ken sehested @ prayerandpolitiks.org

#### **Endnotes**

- [1] See the Wikipedia entry for "News values" for more background.
- [2] Not only by those labeled "terrorists." Defending U.S. military censors' refusal to release video footage showing Iraqi soldiers being cut in half by cannon fire from helicopters, a Pentagon senior official said: "If we let people see that kind of thing, there would never again be any war." —quoted in *The Christian Century*,
- 11 December 1991, p. 1158
- [3] "Husbands Are Deadlier Than Terrorists," New York Times
- [4] Nancy Coleman & Sergio Hernandez, CNN
- [5] Sarah Almukhtar, "US Airstrikes on ISIS Have Killed Hundreds, Maybe Thousands of Civilians," New York Times
- [6] "These are the threats you get when you lead a gun-safety group"
- [7] Jack Jenkins, "Dallas Mayor Says He's More Fearful Of Armed White Men Than Syrian Refugees," *ThinkProgress*
- [8] Rebecca Leber, ThinkProgress
- [9] Robert Preidt, CBS
- [10] "What Republicans are doing while you're distracted by Sessions and Comey," Washington Post
- [11] Listen to his comment (5:37 video).

### God, Guns and Guts

# by Kyle Childress, pastor of Austin Heights Baptist Church in Nacogdoches, Texas (This was first published in Faith & Leadership: www.faithandleadership.com)

What's the solution to the firearms dilemma for a pastor in gunloving Texas? Visiting and listening. That allows a pastor to see how isolated and fearful people are, and it offers a chance to connect them to community.

Thirty years ago, I saw a bumper sticker that said, "God, Guns and Guts: What Made America." These days, it's going to take pastoral guts to deal with the issue of guns in America.

I recently visited a retired man on the fringes of our church at the request of his wife. While she is involved and active in retirement, he tends to stay at home, piddling and watching TV all day.

When I arrived, he invited me in and offered me a glass of iced tea, and we sat down to talk.

"Gary, do you mind if we turn the TV down?" I shouted.

"Sorry," he said, "I watch it during the day with no one else around and forget how loud it is."

I saw that it was on Fox News, something I'd noticed was becoming the norm in my visits with shut-ins and my sojourns in hospital waiting rooms, doctors' offices, car repair waiting rooms, barber shops, restaurants, airports and the like.

So I asked, "Gary, do you watch a lot of Fox News?"

He said, "No, no. Sometimes I watch The Weather Channel."

This was while Hurricane Harvey was heading toward Houston and The Weather Channel was reporting everything in all caps, with exclamation points at the ends of all the sentences.

"Let me ask you something. Does watching Fox and The Weather Channel bother you? I'm wondering because watching this stuff around the clock would drive me crazy," I said.

He agreed with me that his anxiety was high but suggested that the TV was helping, keeping him "informed and ready."

"Ready for what?" I asked.

He walked over and lifted a newspaper from the lamp table next to his recliner. Under it was an automatic pistol. "Looters and anybody else who comes along threatening us. I'm ready to protect our home."

This is not a normal conversation I have with my church members. But it comes up with occasional attendees and first-time visitors. It's something I'm learning to pay attention to, because it reflects conversations out in the wider community.

The old Baptist civil rights activist Will Campbell had a country church preacher tell him, "There's a lot more to this race thing than just segregation." Well, there's a lot more to this gun thing than just the Second Amendment or rights or even hunting.

I'm convinced, after 40 years of being a pastor, that guns are a theological issue -- that guns are a primary way we are drawn into the pervasive power of death.

By death I do not refer simply to the ending of the biological and physical processes of our bodies, though that's part of it. I mean death as a living reality that diminishes, disintegrates, isolates, separates, exploits and destroys God's good creation and creatures.

Theologian William Stringfellow called death a moral reality that is to be comprehended in all its complexity -- "sociologically and anthropologically, psychologically and psychically, economically and politically, societally and institutionally."

"Death as a moral power," he said, "means death as social purpose."

Death seeks to dominate our lives and our world -- and guns are an entry point to death. It was not always this way, or at least it was not as blatant and overt as it is now. I grew up around guns in my small West Texas town and often used them when bird hunting with my father and grandfather, my brother, and sometimes my uncle.

But the rest of the time, the shotguns were put away in closets, and we didn't pay any more attention to them than we did to the hammers and saws we got out when doing carpentry.

Now, though, for me as a pastor to raise a question about why someone carries a firearm on his belt while professing to be a baptized follower of Jesus Christ is to invite outright, in-your-face hostility. It provokes defensiveness that far exceeds expectations. One of the rare times I've been screamed at was after I said something in a sermon against guns.

A pastor friend of mine down the road had to resign his church last year because, over his pleading not to do it, the congregation voted to arm the ushers and install panic buttons throughout the building in case anyone saw a stranger who looked threatening. Many pastors I know have been told by key church members -- off the record -- to not even bring up the subject.

So what do we pastors do?

My own experience says there is no substitute for visiting, visiting, visiting. The key place for being prophetic is around the kitchen table or on the porch or out working in the garden with church members. That comes before being prophetic in the pulpit. As Carlyle Marney used to say, we pastors listen for six days a week for the privilege of speaking for 20 minutes on Sunday morning.

It is in visiting and listening that we learn how fear-filled people are, and often how isolated they are. Researcher George Gerbner, who studied violence on television, found that people who watch a lot of TV are more likely than others to believe that their neighborhoods are unsafe, that crime rates are rising, and that they have a good chance of becoming victims. They're also more likely to own guns.

I'm usually able to talk about guns and Jesus while sitting on the porch with church members because I've sat on the porch with them previously, and I've listened to them. It is out of such listening that we learn how to steer conversations toward discipleship. And out of the trust developed with their pastor, people will often (not always) listen -- even if the pastor challenges them about guns.

I've also learned that it is a never-ending task to help link people in trusting friendships while serving others. People who are together in community and who lean upon Christ and one another are less likely to rely on guns for their comfort and protection. At least, that's my experience.

The challenge is getting them out of the house -- away from their guns and their TVs, computer screens and social media.

For example, I'm trying to get Gary together with another recent retiree who has some of the same health issues Gary has had. He also has a tendency to isolate himself in front of the TV.

But if I can get them to strike up a friendship and then to volunteer tutoring at the elementary school or delivering Meals on Wheels, I'm going to have a better chance of weaning Gary off his reliance on guns.

One more thing (actually, the main thing). Before I go to see Gary, I pray. When I'm with Gary, we pray. And after I leave, I pray some more.

This gun thing is about God, and it's about the power of death. Stringfellow said that only as we immerse ourselves in God, the God of the resurrected life, can we hope to resist the power of death. This is also why I rarely get into discussions about the Second Amendment but I talk a lot about the first commandment. And Jesus.

Will it work? I don't know. Sometimes, after a lot of visiting and listening, preachers find that people still can't part with their guns. The addiction is too deep for them. Sometimes, preachers get run off. Often, preachers have people get in their faces -- though it's been years since anyone has actually pulled a gun on me.

No one said it was going to be easy, least of all the One who called us to take up the cross and follow him. Besides, this is why we get paid the big bucks.

#### Read more from Kyle Childress:

- 1. **A Texas Church's Real Talk About Guns**: *The Christian Century* (www.christiancentury.org/article/first-person/texas-churchs-real-talk-about-guns)
- 2. **Guns in the Pulpit**: *The Christian Century* (www.christiancentury.org/article/2016-02/guns-pulpit)

### Section 2 Pastoral Resources

#### Film & Publications

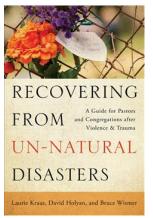
#### Tapestry: Reweaving the Fabric of Community After Public Violence

The *Tapestry* film looks at the effects of public violence events in congregations and the communities of which they are a part. It is framed through the lens of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance National Response Team members who have responded to public violence events and support those communities of faith and their leaders as they walk through the valley of the shadow of trauma and its aftermath and begin the process of healing. 21 minutes.

*Tapestry is* available for free on Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/104723148

Study Guide: http://pma.pcusa.org/site\_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/tapestry\_study\_guide.pdf

For additional resources and downloads: <a href="http://pda.pcusa.org/situation/hcd/">http://pda.pcusa.org/situation/hcd/</a>



#### Recovering From Un-Natural Disasters: A Guide for Pastors and Congregations After Violence & Trauma By Laurie Kraus, David Holyan & Bruce Wismer

**Recovering from Un-Natural Disasters** is a must-read handbook for pastors and church leaders of communities who could or perhaps already have experienced an unnatural disaster, such as gun violence, suicides, or sexual abuse.

Unlike natural disasters, un-natural disasters deal with the concept of sin and require a different recovery strategy. In this book, readers will explore the four phases of human-caused disaster — Devastation and Heroism, Disillusionment, Reforming, and Wisdom — and receive step-by-step suggestions to use with their faith community during the recovery process. Example worship resources, including prayers, music suggestions, and sermons that are appropriate to use during periods of trauma and recovery, are

included. To purchase the book:

http://www.wjkbooks.com/Products/0664262155/recovering-from-unnatural-disasters.aspx

### Scripture Passages for Addressing Gun Violence

#### **Old Testament**

- **Genesis 1:27 -** We are created in the image of God
- Exodus 20:13 Thou shall not kill
- **Leviticus 19 -** God's shalom to reign in all aspects of life
- **Deuteronomy 21:1-9** Take Responsibility for a murder
- **Deuteronomy 30:11; 19-20 -** Choose life that you may live
- **Isaiah 2:3-4** Beat swords into plowshares
- **Isaiah 9:5-7 -** Unto us a child is born
- **Isaiah 11:1-9 -** A vision of peace
- **Isaiah 30:9ff -** Those who spurn God's call to righteousness
- **Isaiah 40: 1-11 -** Comfort for God's people
- **Isaiah 58:12 -** Being a repairer of the breach
- **Jeremiah 29: 1ff -** Seek the Welfare of the City
- **Zechariah 8:1ff -** Zechariah's vision of New Jerusalem

#### New Testament

- **Matthew 5:9** Blessed are the peacemakers
- **Matthew 5:13ff -** You are the salt of the earth, light of world
- **Matthew 6:10 -** Thy Kingdom Come on earth
- **Matthew 19:19 -** Love your neighbor as yourself
- **Matthew 26:52 -** Those who live by the sword die by it
- **Luke 10:25-28 -** Thinking is important The Great commandment
- **Luke 22:47-53** Jesus and Violence
- **I Corinthians 13 -** Greatest of these is love
- **II Corinthians 5:16ff -** God gave us the ministry of reconciliation
- **Galatians 6:7-10 -** Don't lose heart
- **Ephesians 6:10ff -** Wrestling against a gigantic evil
- **Philippians 2:1ff The Mind of Christ**
- **Revelation 5:9-13 -** The victor over evil is Lamb who was slain
- **Revelation 11:15 -** Kingdoms of world become kingdoms of Christ
- **Revelation 19:6 -** God's certain victory over evil

These texts certainly do not exhaust the Biblical witness against humanity's bent to call evil good and good evil. The Bible presents God's recurring call for us to love mercy and do justice and to fight against violence, injustice and exploitation as we trust in the ultimate victory of God over all that negates and degrades human life.

The Bible brims with hope because God is sovereign. "Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet." God's word encourages us to be a reconciler, a peacemaker, to love neighbors, to do justice, to build shalom--the well-being of all people in human society.

### HYMNS Relating to Gun Violence

### From Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

Special thanks to hymn writer and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship member Carolyn Winfrey Gillette who gives permission to use these hymns in worship and by ecumenical groups committed to ending gun violence:

I Cried to God
God of Mercy, You Have Shown Us
God, We Have Heard It
O Christ, You Did No Violence
They Met to Read the Bible
When People Die by Hatred

**See** www.carolynshymns.com/topical\_index.html

### From Jann Aldredge-Clanton

A special thanks to BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz member Jann Aldredge-Clanton for giving us permission to include these hymns. For more, visit www.jannaldredgeclanton.com/music.php.

#### **Holy Wisdom Still Is Calling**

Proverbs 1:20-23, 3:17-18; Isaiah 65:17-25 Holy Wisdom still is calling, "Who will take my paths of peace?" Long Her urgent cry has sounded, "When will all the violence cease?" Wars in many lands are raging, and on many city streets, "Who will work to stop the fighting?" Holy Wisdom still entreats.

Holy Wisdom still is calling, "Who will help my world to mend, work to stop the wars of nations and domestic violence end?" We will join in Wisdom's mission, bringing healing everywhere, changing all oppressive systems as with Her we dream and dare.

Holy Wisdom still is calling, "Who will work to end the strife?" Long Her patient call has sounded, "Who will nurture all of life?" We will gladly answer Wisdom, work with Her for peace on earth, take Her paths of love and justice, new creation now to birth.

Words © Jann Aldredge-Clanton, from Earth Transformed with Music! Inclusive Songs for Worship

**ELLESDIE** 

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#### Awake to Work for Peace on Earth

Proverbs 1:20-24, 3:13-18, 8:20

Awake to work for peace on earth through Holy Wisdom's power; come, join together, give our all in this most urgent hour. For ages long has Wisdom cried with message strong and clear; so many people have refused Her call throughout the years.

Still Wisdom calls to everyone to join Her work of peace; now let us rise to follow Her so justice may increase. We all are broken from the wounds that violence brings to earth; we all are longing for the day our wholeness is rebirthed.

Rejoice, for Holy Wisdom comes with guidance for each day; She lives within us and above to show the peaceful way. Rejoice, for Wisdom blesses life with gifts beyond compare; then let us co-create with Her a world so free and fair.

Words © Jann Aldredge-Clanton from *Inclusive Hymns for Liberation*, *Peace*, and *Justice* 

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#### **How Long Christ-Sophia?**

Proverbs 1:20-23; Psalm 74:3-7; Psalm 94: 3-7; Habakkuk 1: 1-4

How long, Christ-Sophia, how long must we wait? O when will the violence and suffering abate? The children are crying; O come to their aid; Our pleadings and prayers on your altar we've laid.

How long, Christ-Sophia, how long will it be Till justice will triumph so all can be free? O surely you feel all the anguish and pain; For you also suffer; rejected you've lain.

Arise, Christ-Sophia, and help us, we pray; With you we will labor to bring a new day; With you we will challenge the forces of wrong, Till we overcome with your love deep and strong.

Words © 2001 Jann Aldredge-Clanton from *Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians* 

GORDON 11.11.11.11

#### Our Mother-Father God, We Praise Your Prophets Bold

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 5:9-12; 13:57; 23:37

Our Mother-Father God, we praise your prophets bold, Who call for peace and liberty for young and old. Your prophets come to help the poor and those oppressed, Who through the violence and abuse cry in distress.

Our Mother-Father God, we praise your prophets strong, Who filled with deep devotion speak against the wrong. Though often scoffed and scorned, your prophets lead the way, Proclaiming truth, inspiring hope through night and day.

Our Mother-Father God, your prophets we will be, In partnership to change the world so all are free. New visions we will speak; new ventures we will dare; We'll join with sisters and with brothers everywhere.

Words © Jann Aldredge-Clanton from *Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians* 

LEONI

Irregular

#### Rise and Speak Out

Proverbs 1:20-23; 3:13-18; Luke 4:18

When we look all around And see violence abound, We are filled with distress, fear, and doubt. Then we hear Wisdom say, "We can show a new way." And She leads us to rise and speak out.

There are those who condemn
People different from them;
They abuse and oppress with their clout.
Wisdom calls us to go,
And Her kindness to show,
And She leads us with love to speak out.

There'll be justice and peace
And the captives' release,
When we wake up and hear Wisdom shout.
Then with Her we will dwell,
And Her Good News we'll tell,
For with Wisdom we'll rise and speak out.

#### **REFRAIN:**

Rise up and shout, For it's time to speak out; Let us cry out with Wisdom; Let us rise and speak out.

Words © 2004 Jann Aldredge-Clanton from *Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians* 

TRUST AND OBEY

### Worship Resources

### A Sample Vigil to Support those who Grieve

This vigil worship service was created by Rev. Margery Rossi and has been used to remember and grieve after many incidents of gun violence. Some of these worship resources come from the "God Not Guns" program of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence <u>www.bradycampaign.org</u>



Prayer Vigil

July 26, 2012 

8:00 PM

Stony Point Presbyterian Church

### We grieve with you, Aurora, Colorado.

May God be with you in your grief,
that you may know consolation.
May God be with you in your anger,
that you may receive peace.
May God be with you in your confusion,
that you may be led to truth.
And may God be with you in your fear,
that you may delivered into surpassing love.

#### We Grieve...

#### Call To Worship

Leader: Come let us go to the mountain of the LORD,

that we may walk the path of the Most High.

### People: That we may beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.

Leader: We gather today in remembrance of all those killed or harmed by gun violence in Colorado, Alabama and New York just this week.

### People: We mourn the loss of 30,000 of our brothers and sisters, killed by guns in our country this year.

Leader: We are a nation at war with ourselves, a people who have forgotten who we are.

### People: We gather today to remember that we are each a child of God.

### We gather to claim our belonging to each other and our commitment to living the way of God's peace.

Leader: Come let us go to the mountain of the LORD, that we may walk the path of the Most High.

### People: That we may beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.

Leader: Neighbor shall not lift up gun against neighbor.

Neither shall they learn violence any more.

## All: And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of Hosts has spoken. Opening Prayer

Gracious God,

Inspire us with the gift of shalom,

the gift of wholeness and the promise of your presence.

Give us wisdom to seek nonviolence

as an answer to the violence of our lives and world.

Give us courage to seek wholeness in a fractured and divided world,

to find reconciliation rather than revenge,

to abandon the instruments of violence and death

and entrust our lives, our homes and our families to you.

May your presence fill us and others with the thirst for unity,

wholeness, and the desire to see all people valued

as created in your image.

May we and others receive your Shalom

that we might be faithful instruments of your love. Amen.

(Adapted from Episcopal Peace Fellowship, "Gift of Shalom")

#### Hymn: God of Mercy A Hymn Lamenting Gun Violence

#### Scripture Reading: Psalm 46

God is our refuge and our strength, who from of old has helped us in our distress. Therefore we fear nothing – even if the earth should open up in front of us and mountains plunge into the depths of the sea, even if the earth's waters rage and foam and the mountains tumble with its heaving.

There's a river whose streams gladden the city of God, the holy dwelling of the Most High.

God is in its midst, it will never fall –

God will help it at daybreak.

Though nations are in turmoil and empires crumble,

God's voice resounds, and it melts the earth.

The God of Hosts is with us – our stronghold is the God of Israel!

Come, see what Yahweh has done — God makes the earth bounteous! God has put an end to war, from one end of the earth to the other, breaking bows, splintering spears, and setting chariots on fire. "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted upon the earth."

The God of Hosts is with us – our stronghold is the God of Israel!

#### **Hymn: Amazing Grace**

We Remember... Time of Reflection and Remembrance

During this time, you may offer a brief reflection or remembrance.

#### Litany of Remembrance

Leader 1: Let us remember all who have been harmed by violence.

We acknowledge the strength of those who survived and of those still struggling to heal.

For their sake and for ours, we commit ourselves to building each other up and to healing – together.

Leader 2: Let us remember the families and loved ones

of those who have died from gun violence.

We acknowledge their pain and their deep grief.

They too, are part of our community,

 $and\ need\ our\ love\ and\ help\ towards\ healing.$ 

Leader 3: Let us remember the perpetrators, and the families of those who commit violence.

We acknowledge that their lives, too, are devastated and their hopes dashed.

For their sake and for ours, we remember

that pain goes in many directions from each act of violence.

All: We will stand up to violence.

We stand together expressing our unity, our connection to each other and to the divine; our hope for healing and for transformation. Let the Spirit of our Creator move through us.

Help us to transform and heal our communities.

And let us begin by transforming ourselves. Amen.

(Written for Vigils Against Violence by Pat Long and Vandy Bradow)

#### We Hope...

### Scripture Reading Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them. He said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



#### **Closing Prayer**

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds.

Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.

Let us be aware of the source of being,
common to us all and to all living things.

Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion,
let us fill our hearts with our own compassion —
towards ourselves and towards all living beings.

Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering
to each other. With humility, with awareness of the existence of life,
and of the sufferings that are going on around us,
let us practice the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth.



-- Thich N'hat Hanh

#### **Hymn: The Canticle of the Turning**

#### We Act...

Write a message on a prayer flag,\*
soon to be sent to the people of Aurora.
Sign letters to our legislators.
Join us as we mobilize in response to God's call.

\* The prayer flags were pieces of fabric (5 x 7) in different colors. Participants used permanent markers to send a short symbol or prayer. The flags were sent to the Presbyterian Church or Presbytery office nearest the gun violence attack, inviting them to hang the flags outside their building, as a sign of our mutual grief and support.

### A Litany on the Tragedy of Gun Violence

### Written for Martin Luther King Day by Rev. Mark Koenig for the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

**One:** We celebrate and give thanks for the life and witness of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Many:** Who proclaimed a vision of all people living together, and bore witness to the power of non-violence,

**One:** We gather, to remember his words, his commitment, his life and to rededicate ourselves to addressing the evil of gun violence,

**Many:** which claimed his life and which continues to plague our country and the world.

**One:** Over 30,000 Americans die by guns each year in the United States.

**Many:** And we grieve.

**One:** An average of ninety people is killed by guns every day, including ten children.

Many: And our hearts break.

**One:** Guns kill some 1,000 people each day in the developing world.

**Many:** And we mourn.

**One:** An American child is twelve times more likely to die by a gun than are the children who live in all twenty-five industrialized nations combined.

**Many:** And we weep.

**One:** The annual economic cost of gun violence in America is estimated to be at least \$100 billion. Medical costs, decimated families, the court system, our jails and prisons, and security measures in airports, schools, and public buildings all contribute to this sum.

**Many:** And sorrow sweeps over us.

**One:** Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gun fire within our own country than American servicemen and women who were killed in all our wars of the 20th century.

**Many:** And we pray.

**One:** Faced with gun violence,

**Many:** We grieve for those are killed and those whose lives are forever changed; We seek to comfort for those who have lost loved ones; We pray for a change of heart for those who resort to violence.

**One:** Faced with gun violence, may we

Many: Educate; Organize; Advocate;

And in all the ways we can, work for that day when Guns and weapons of destruction

Are transformed into instruments of healing.

**One:** May it be so.

**Many:** May we so do.

### A Litany for those Slain by Gun Violence

### From the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference

This litary was written as a response to the church shooting in Sutherland Springs, TX, but can be used more broadly.

A Litany For Those Slain By Gun Violence in TX Nov. 5, 2017

Leader: A sound is heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for

her children. She refuses to be comforted, for they are dead.

Assembly: We pray for the families of the victims who have been slain by gun violence.

Leader: A sound is heard in every city. Communities are weeping generationally for their

elders, children and loved ones. Our sons, like Emmett Till, Trayvon Martin. Our brothers, like Ezell Ford, Michael Brown and John Crawford. Our daughters, like Ayanna Jones, Miriam Carey. Our sisters, like Malisa Williams and Tarika

Wilson.

Assembly: As people of God, we weep for the lives of all of God's children who, instead

of enjoying the sweetness of innocence become victims of hate, victims of war,

and victims of violence.

Leader: Now, let us rise up and interrupt these rushing waters of violence that leave

children and communities wounded and paralyzed, traumatized by internal disintegration and state terror. Let us rise up and demand this nation abandon its

affair with beliefs, practices and laws that are rooted in militarism.

Assembly: We will rise up against laws rooted in evil that have no concern for life, nor

any concern for God's love. We will rise up until justice rolls on like a river

and righteousness like a never-failing stream.

Leader: Oh Lord, we commit ourselves to seeing all of your people the way that you see

them. No matter their age or race, they are precious gifts made in your image,

created with transformative purpose and unlimited promise.

Assembly And for that cause, we pledge to be hedges of protection for their lives, we

pledge to stand against anything that threatens their potential or promise.

All: We embody the universal spirit of *Ubuntu*, "I am because we are and because we

are, I am." We are all Rachel crying for the children! Therefore, we pledge to lock arms in solidarity with the families of the slain. We pledge to let our voices be heard all over this nation and the world, for we know we are called to do what

is just and right.

### A Prayer for Peace (Luke 1.67-79)

### Jeremy Rutledge, Circular Congregational Church December 6, 2015

Thirty years ago my father woke me up. He sat at the edge of my bed and held a rolled up copy of the newspaper. "Jeremy, I need to talk to you," he said. I sat up and looked at him without saying anything. And he explained.

The front page of the newspaper contained a story of horrific gun violence. There were two killings in a home near us. It was a home that we knew well because one of my best friends lived there. His name was Travis and I had spent many nights in his home, having dinner with his family, staying up late playing board games at sleepovers. It was a place I felt at home, a place I had always felt safe. And then the newspaper came. Travis' father had shot his brother and then himself and somehow left a note for Travis that said not to come inside but to go to the neighbor's and call the police. And that was the story. My friend lost half his family and my father came to tell me. I remember sitting up in the bed with my father and weeping.

In the thirty years since, I have thought of Travis countless times. Almost every time I unroll the newspaper and read of some other horrific act of gun violence. I remember the small apartment Travis and his mother moved into. I remember how philosophical our sleepover conversations became. I remember how we ditched the board games and just went for walks. I remember stopping across from his old house where Travis slumped to the curb and cried. All these memories wash over me when I read of the latest shooting here or there. I always wonder how Travis feels when he reads the news, how his mother is, and how everybody else is, too, the thousands and thousands of victims of gun violence in a country where it has become an epidemic. I didn't know thirty years ago, how common our trauma was or would become. I didn't know that it would only get worse and worse. I didn't know that every place I would live after that would suffer terrible crimes and massacres committed with guns. My father didn't tell me that as he sat at the edge of my bed. He didn't know, either. And neither of us could have imagined it.

I should say that at the time we were gun owners. My father grew up on the outskirts of San Antonio, a Texas Hill County boy. He was a respecter of guns and a good marksman and hunter. He raised me to be the same and we had a rifle and a shotgun that we used for hunting and skeet. I knew how to take a gun apart, clean it, and put it back together. I knew how to handle a gun safely and how to store it when not in use. To this day I have no objection to people possessing guns for hunting and sport, nor does anyone I know really object to this, but something has happened since my father was a boy and since I was, and our gun culture has shifted from responsible ownership to unregulated proliferation. And here I am talking about not simply the guns that we used to hunt, but the saturation of the market with military weapons; the Glock-style pistols and assault-style rifles designed to kill people, as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. In my lifetime, these kinds of weapons have become less and less regulated, the loopholes for purchasing them without background checks have become larger, and incidents of gun violence have risen dramatically. In a recent Op-Ed in the Post and Courier, Dr. Robert Ball and Dr. Richard Hagerty noted that "from 1984 to 1993, gun murders increased by 55 percent in the U. S." "Every day," they told us, "there are 91 gun-related deaths on average, or about 1 each 16 minutes." "13

I sat with Dr. Ball at a luncheon on Friday. It was part of an event at Mother Emanuel AME Church entitled "Moving from Crisis to Action: A Public Health Approach to Reducing Gun Violence." The event was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Robert Ball and Richard Hagerty, "Gun Violence – A Public Health Issue," The Post and Courier, November 8, 2015 accessed online at http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151108/PC1002/151109374&source=RSS

sponsored by the College of Charleston, the Medical University of South Carolina, Mother Emanuel AME Church, and the American Bar Association. It was a full day of looking at gun violence as a public health crisis. Doctors, lawyers, clergy, law enforcement, public officials, students, and community activists all sat together to learn about the epidemic and to strategize about what we could do. No one argued against gun ownership. But everyone argued for common sense measures to prevent gun violence. Those measures include steps toward an ethic of gun ownership; the responsibilities that go along with the right. It was a powerful time and place for the conversation. Six months after the shootings at Mother Emanuel. We sat in the sanctuary with members of a congregation and a community still shocked and grieving. I kept thinking of my old friend Travis. But I was also thinking of Rev. Pinckney. And Walter Scott. And a hundred other names and faces from newspapers unrolled morning after morning in America.

One newspaper that made a splash recently was a New York tabloid. After the latest gun massacre in San Bernardino, California it led with the headline "God Isn't Fixing This." <sup>14</sup> The headline was an indictment of politicians who offered prayers and platitudes without taking any meaningful action to prevent gun violence. Some in the religious community had their feathers ruffled by the headline, but I have to say I agreed with it. Or at least my concept of prayer did. In my view, prayer is not just whispering words with our heads bowed or holding good thoughts in our minds; it is also praying with our hearts and our hands through service and with our lives through meaningful action for change. Dr. King and Rabbi Heschel were praying "with their feet," as Heschel said, when they linked arms together in Selma. And I felt the beginnings of such a prayer on Friday as so many concerned citizens sat and strategized, filled the pews of that sacred space with our bodies, and filled the air with serious talk and planning to make our community safer and to save some of our sisters and brothers from this violence. God isn't fixing this, I thought. Not without us. God is only fixing this with us. If we will make ourselves into our prayers for peace. This is not to say that we should not meditate and pray on our own. But it is to say that won't be enough. The private prayers are simply to help us catch our breath. To center ourselves and get our heads on straight for the public prayers, which are organization and action and work for meaningful change.

It's a timely theme this second Sunday of Advent in the city of Charleston. Our theme is peace and our text is a song sung by a father to his son. Zechariah didn't sit at the edge of his son's bed with a rolled up copy of the newspaper, but he might as well have. Because his words were equally tender; they contain a dream of peace for his son and for all the sons and daughters of the future.

Near the end of the first chapter of Luke, we are given the Song of Zechariah. Zechariah was an old man and he and Elizabeth had been surprised by the news that they would have a child. They named the child John and he would grow up to become known as "the baptizer," preparing the way for a new day, when God's kingdom would be ushered in. It was to this child that Zechariah sang, and his song sounded like something that might shape the imagination of a young prophet. "Blessed be the Lord," Zechariah began, "[who] visited [the] people and shaped their deliverance." Then he sang of deliverance from enemies, the showing of mercy, relationships that were just, and offerings of forgiveness. The song ended with one of the most beautiful blessings ever bestowed on a child, a prayer that the boy himself would be an instrument of peace:

[And] you, child, will be called the highest prophet.
You will go before the lord to make ready [the lord's] ways,
To give knowledge of salvation to [the] people,
Through the forgiveness of their sins.
Through the tender mercies of our God
The dawn sun will visit us from its heights
To illuminate those of us who are sitting
In darkness and the shadow of death,

<sup>14.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> "God Isn't Fixing This," The New York Daily News, December 3, 2015, accessed online at <a href="http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/gop-candidates-call-prayers-calf-massacre-article-1.2453261">http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/gop-candidates-call-prayers-calf-massacre-article-1.2453261</a>

And to guide our feet along the way of peace.<sup>15</sup>

What a beautiful prayer for Advent. A parent's blessing of a baby, that the child might grow and become a participant in knowledge, in mercy, and in lighting the path to peace. The words and images are well-suited to the season as we gather in winter with the nights growing longer. As we feel the shadows of this epidemic of violence around us. And as the acolyte lights candles and the youth bring greenery and decorate this sacred hall with the signs and symbols of life and love even in the midst of the depth and darkness of our trouble. All of it is a prayer for peace, a prayer centered in the idea of who and whose we are. We are a people of hope, we said last week, telling stories of hope. We are a people of peace, we say this week, working for peace in our hearts and our world. We are a people of love, we'll say next week, and people of joy, we'll say the week after. And since we prize these things – hope, peace, love, joy – our hearts are broken every time we unroll the newspaper and read again that they are in short supply.

The good news is that there is a great deal that can be done to usher them in. And for those who would like to pray with their feet and with their hands and lives, I do have an invitation. A new group formed in Charleston in the wake of the Mother Emanuel shootings. The group is intentionally non-partisan and open to everyone. It is called Gun Sense SC and its initial goal is to lobby policy makers for universal background checks on gun purchases in our state and to close what is now called the "Charleston loophole," which is the exception that allowed Mr. Roof to purchase a gun he used to kill our friends and neighbors. Incidentally, a 2015 poll shows that in South Carolina 91% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats support background checks on all gun purchases. 16 Friday we listened to our chief of police speak strongly in favor of background checks as a public safety measure. And we heard expert after expert testify to the effectiveness of background checks. Gun Sense SC was formed by people in our community who wanted to turn their grief and frustration into meaningful action. And they wanted to do it as broadly as possible, inviting all South Carolinians to join. And so I invite you, friends, to search your own conscience, and to join us if you are able. Gun Sense SC is not a religious group, but it strikes me that all its actions may be a real prayer for peace. They are a prayer that we can disrupt the cycle of violence and begin to take steps to make our community safer for everyone who lives here. Gun Sense SC will introduce itself to the public tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. on the steps of Mother Emanuel AME Church.

I plan to be there. And I'll look like a 44-year-old man standing with a community of concerned sisters and brothers. But, friends, I'll really be a 14-year-old kid sitting up in bed, weeping with my father. Saying a prayer for my friend.

Amen.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Willis Barnstone, *The Restored New Testament* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 333.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> See Ball and Hagerty.

# Making a Movement (Mark 11:1-11): A Sermon for Holy Week

### Rev. Dr. Amy Butler, The Riverside Church, New York, NY

There was bright sunshine warming the cool air as thousands of people gathered in the streets, chanting and waving, singing and marching. They were there because they wanted change to come, because they'd been invited to gather to make a statement with their very presence. That was the scene more than 2000 years ago in the streets of Jerusalem, the day we remember today.

Welcome to the start of Holy Week, the very beginning of a whole week of remembering events that make up the foundation of our faith. One of the unique characteristics of Christian faith is our constant invitation to become part of a story, the story of Jesus' life and ministry on earth and the story of God's ongoing love for the whole world. This week we remember Jesus' death and resurrection, and we begin today, as our children have already reminded us, with the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We know, of course, that this was more than a parade. It was really a protest—a staged response to the Roman Emperor Pontus Pilate entering Jerusalem from the West, a huge military parade put on for the purpose of showing military might and dominance. The story we heard this morning happened on the other side of town, the streets filled with people chanting "Hosanna! Save us!," as Jesus rode in on a donkey. The people in the streets at that parade were hoping that Jesus would be the one to finally release them from the oppression of Rome, from the crippling societal conditions under which they were living. You know the story well.

During this whole season of Lent we've been making our way through the gospel of Mark, hearing about how Jesus is at every turn changing the rules for what it means to be human in this world. Mark's gospel, as I've told you over and over this season, is very spare on the details of these stories. Considered by many scholars to be the earliest gospel written, Mark's writer did not sit down with the intent of meandering through his memories of life with Jesus; rather he pieced together various accounts of Jesus' life and ministry in a book that was intended from its first to depict the urgency, the life and death quality, the radically uncomfortable nature of Jesus' message. Mark gospel is perhaps the most rough in terms of style and literary quality; his sentences are short and he uses the word "immediately" over and over again. In fact, Mark leaves out so many details of the story that our lectionary—the assigned passages for each week—has taken us some weeks to some of the other gospel writers in order to fill in the details of the story.

Today, however, Mark's account of events is completely out of character. Recall the gospel passage we just heard. It's the story of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the big parade we celebrate every year at the beginning of Holy Week. But today's passage—eleven verses from Mark chapter eleven—only tells about Jesus' actual entry in the very last verse of the passage. The other verses are all devoted...to the details.

The passage begins with Jesus and his disciples approaching Jerusalem from the eastern side of the city. Recall that the city was full of people getting ready for Passover, so Jesus and his disciples would have been among many on their way into the city. As they approached the Mount of Olives, Mark begins to tell us in detail the instructions that Jesus gives his disciples: go into the village ahead of us. You will find the colt of a donkey tied there. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone asks you why you are untying it, tell them the Lord needs it and we will bring it back to you immediately.

After Jesus gives these detailed instructions to his disciples, Mark tells us what happens—exactly as Jesus said it would—repeating all the details again: disciples go into the village; colt of a donkey tied to near a door; disciples untie it; people ask what they're doing; they say Jesus needs it and they'll bring it back shortly; they get the donkey. Mark then goes into several more verses of detail, telling us how the disciples prepared for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, laying their cloaks on the donkey, lining the streets with their cloaks, too, along with leafy branches cut from the fields, and leading the crowds in chants of "Hosanna!" "Save us!" as Jesus rode into the

city. And after his very short description of the actual gathering in the street that day, Mark tells us that Jesus and his disciples pack everything up and head back out of Jerusalem, back to the work of preaching and organizing the people in the villages around city.

That's a lot of detail for Mark, and it's curious that he chooses to tell the story this way. I have to wonder if maybe that's the point. Maybe Mark wanted us to sit up and take notice, to realize as we stand on the edge of this week filled with dramatic events, that there are many things that have to happen behind the scenes for a protest to become substantive change, for a moment to become a movement. Living in the way of Jesus is more than just showing up every once in awhile; true transformation takes hard work, attending to the details, showing up not just once but again and again and again until change, within and without, begins to take hold.

It's impossible to read the story of Palm Sunday this morning, of course, and not think about what happened in our city and in cities across the country just yesterday. Like 2000 years ago in Jerusalem, people in our country seem to be longing for change, and many Americans were determined to make a statement with their presence in the streets. You answered a call to show up—a large group of Riversiders turned out for the March for Our Lives, people of faith telling the world that gun violence in our country has to end, that we need better laws to protect vulnerable communities from the evil of gun violence in the classroom and in our streets and even in our backyards.

I myself spent most of Friday afternoon painstakingly working on my sign for the protest—a huge feat since I am not an artist by any stretch of the imagination. I did that because I, too, have been caught up in the energy sweeping our country especially since the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School. As you know, these efforts are led by young people who are tired of waiting for adults to make change and deciding instead to take things into their own hands. But as I sat at my dining room table working on my protest sign, getting everything ready to show up early Saturday morning, I couldn't help but think of something DeRay McKesson said when he was here at Riverside in February. He looked out over this nave, packed with well-meaning people who showed up to talk about racism in our country, and he said something like: "You all are so good at making protest signs—beautiful signs that you bring out into the streets with the crowds. You show up for the protests. But when it comes to doing the hard work of changing the systems that cause injustice—when it comes to making changes that impact your own comfort and privilege—you don't go there."

Parkland students and other young activists who organized the March for Our Lives are not focused solely on one day of people flooding the streets of every city in America. They are focused instead on real, substantive change, and that change is found in the hard work of shifting laws and systems, of moving an entire culture toward a new way of seeing the world. This is happening, not just with one day of protesting in the streets, but with countless hours of preparation, with massive efforts to register new voters, with campaigns like Parents Promise to Kids—kids who are too young to vote getting their parents to pledge only to vote for legislators who prioritize the safety of children over guns.

I wonder if Mark took painstaking detail to tell the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem for the purpose of reminding us that there is so much more than a protest in the streets that has to happen for a movement to gain traction, for true change to really take hold. Change will come—and not because of one beautiful Saturday of protesting in the streets. Change will come through the day in, day out work we do, work that is difficult and tedious, uncomfortable and hard. It takes preparation and commitment, follow through and tenacity, the dedication of our whole lives to the work of living the gospel.

We're standing now on the edge of Holy Week, gathered with Jesus and the disciples and many people in Jerusalem at a parade, a protest, really. The sun is shining and the energy in the air is palpable. Our children are singing and waving their palms, we feel a sense of possibility for all that we can be and do together. But for Jesus and his disciples, getting here has been difficult—years of preaching and teaching, sacrifice, hard work, planning, organization. For all of them, and for us, moving past today into the week ahead is going to be even harder, requiring tenacity and commitment many of them could not summon.

For us, following Jesus from this moment full of optimism and possibility, all the way to the cross...well, that is going to require making change that causes us discomfort. We will have to go to places that hurt, confront realities that make us uneasy, look at ourselves with attention to the ways in which we fail. I wonder if we will have the courage that it takes to walk with Jesus through this whole week, to see the change through to the end—past the colorful protest signs and the enthusiasm of the crowd and the excitement of an idea whose time has come?

Jesus ended up on a cross alone, all of the friends who joined him in the streets only one week before having left, deserting him. They did not learn the lesson Jesus had been trying to teach them—that real change—in our lives and in our world—takes painstaking attention to the details, to the work that happens behind the scenes and even after a moment like the one they had in the streets of Jerusalem that day. It's the hard work of making a movement, of preparing to live into what we cannot see, hearts filled with faith that God will be with us no matter what we face ahead of us.

As we begin the journey into Holy Week today, we're being invited to join the parade, the protest calling for our world to change. But we can't pack up our protest signs and stop there. Jesus invites us to join him in living a gospel that will take our whole lives, every moment, every day, dedicated to ushering in a new reality, to making a movement. May we find the courage we need to keep showing up.

Amen.



### October 11-12, 2018

All we need to end gun violence in America is faith that it can be done and the will to act. To this end, on October 11-2 The Riverside Church will host an intensive training on gun violence for people of faith and goodwill committed to ending gun violence. Attendees will gain concrete tools to educate, engage, and mobilize your congregations to enact change in your community. Those who attend do not have to agree on the solutions to the epidemic of gun violence, only that something must be done.

To inquire about discount rates and scholarships, email godandguns@trcnyc.org.

We pray for those who have been killed in our city this year.

### A prayer from the 2016 Service of Crosses

### by Rev. Jim Hopkins of Lake Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland and Rabbi David Cooper of Kehila Synagogue in Oakland

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray for the loved ones left behind.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that the families in their grief be held and supported by our whole community.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray for all victims of violence everywhere in the world this year.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that violence cease.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that the causes of violence cease.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray for the end of hatred, greed, disempowerment and deprivation.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that Oakland be a city of peace.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that our Ceasefire efforts succeed ever better and better.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that Oakland be a city where all our young people can find good recreation and fulfilling lives.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that Oakland be a city of full employment, a city of good schools, a city of health care for everyone.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that we not only pray with our lips but with our actions.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

We pray that when we return here next year that there are no crosses for us to remove.

Merciful One, hear our prayers

### When You Fear Someone May Take Their Life\*\*

\*\*This section is not offered as medical advice or to replace professional medical intervention and help. These are suggestions from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Most suicidal individuals give some warning of their intentions. The most effective way to prevent a friend or loved one from taking his or her life is to recognize the factors that put people at risk for suicide, take warning signs seriously and know how to respond.

#### **Know the Facts**

#### PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

More than 90 percent of people who kill themselves are suffering from one or more psychiatric disorders, in particular:

- Major depression (especially when combined with alcohol and/or drug abuse)
- Bipolar depression
- Alcohol abuse and dependence
- Drug abuse and dependence
- Schizophrenia
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders

Depression and the other mental disorders that may lead to suicide are -- in most cases -- both recognizable and treatable. Remember, depression can be lethal.

The core symptoms of major depression are a "down" or depressed mood most of the day or a loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were previously enjoyed for at least two weeks, as well as:

- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Change in appetite or weight
- Intense anxiety, agitation, restlessness or being slowed down
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Decreased concentration, indecisiveness or poorer memory
- Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, self-reproach or excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

#### PAST SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

Between 25 and 50 percent of people who kill themselves had previously attempted suicide. Those who have made suicide attempts are at higher risk for actually taking their own lives.

Availability of means: In the presence of depression and other risk factors, ready access to guns and other weapons, medications or other methods of self-harm increases suicide risk.

#### **Recognize the Imminent Dangers**

The signs that most directly warn of suicide include:

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself (weapons, pills or other means)
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Has made plans or preparations for a potentially serious attempt

Other warning signs include expressions or other indications of certain intense feelings in addition to depression, in particular:

- Insomnia
- Intense anxiety, usually exhibited as psychic pain or internal tension, as well as panic attacks
- Feeling desperate or trapped -- like there's no way out
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling there's no reason or purpose to live
- Rage or anger

Certain behaviors can also serve as warning signs, particularly when they are not characteristic of the person's normal behavior. These include:

- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Engaging in violent or self-destructive behavior
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends or family

#### Take it Seriously

- Fifty to 75 percent of all suicides give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member.
- Imminent signs must be taken seriously.

#### **Be Willing to Listen**

- Start by telling the person you are concerned and give him/her examples.
- If he/she is depressed, don't be afraid to ask whether he/she is considering suicide, or if he/ she has a particular plan or method in mind.
- Ask if they have a therapist and are taking medication.
- Do not attempt to argue someone out of suicide. Rather, let the person know you care, that he/she is not alone, that suicidal feelings are temporary and that depression can be treated. Avoid the temptation to say, "You have so much to live for," or "Your suicide will hurt your family."

#### Seek Professional Help

- Be actively involved in encouraging the person to see a physician or mental health professional immediately.
- Individuals contemplating suicide often don't believe they can be helped, so you may have to do more.
- Help the person find a knowledgeable mental health professional or a reputable treatment facility, and take them to the treatment.

#### In an Acute Crisis

If a friend or loved one is threatening, talking about or making plans for suicide, these are signs of an acute crisis.

- Do not leave the person alone.
- Remove from the vicinity any firearms, drugs or sharp objects that could be used for suicide.
- Take the person to an emergency room or walk-in clinic at a psychiatric hospital.
- If a psychiatric facility is unavailable, go to your nearest hospital or clinic.
- If the above options are unavailable, call 911 or:

#### Follow-up on Treatment

- Suicidal individuals are often hesitant to seek help and may need your continuing support to pursue treatment after an initial contact.
- If medication is prescribed, make sure your friend or loved one is taking it exactly as prescribed. Be aware of possible side effects and be sure to notify the physician if the person seems to be getting worse. Usually, alternative medications can be prescribed.
- Frequently the first medication doesn't work. It takes time and persistence to find the right medication(s) and therapist for the individual person.

#### **Talking about Suicide**

#### Give accurate information about suicide

- Suicide is a complicated behavior. It is not caused by a single event such as a bad grade, an argument with loved ones, or the breakup of a relationship.
- In most cases, suicide is caused by an underlying mental disorder like depression or substance abuse. Mental disorders affect the way people feel and prevent them from thinking clearly and rationally. Having a mental disorder is nothing to be ashamed of, and help is available.
- Talking about suicide in a calm, straightforward manner does not put ideas into other people's minds, adults or kids.
- Address blaming and scapegoating. It is common to try to answer the question "why?" after a suicide death. Sometimes this turns into blaming others for the death. Ultimately, this question is impossible to answer.
- Do not focus on the method or graphic details. Talking in graphic detail about the method can create images that are upsetting and can increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable individuals.
- If asked, it is okay to give basic facts about the method, but don't give graphic details or talk at length about it. The focus should be not on how someone killed themselves but rather on how to cope with feelings of sadness, loss, anger, etc.
- Address anger. Accept expressions of anger at the deceased and explain that these feelings are normal.
- Address feelings of responsibility. Reassure those who feel responsible or think they could have done something to save the deceased.
- Encourage help-seeking. Encourage individuals to seek help from a trusted family and a counselor if they or a friend are feeling depressed or suicidal.

# Supporting Those Who Grieve

### 1. Coping with Loss

Survivors, the ones left in the wake of death, often experience a wide range of grief reactions, including some or all of the following:

- Shock is a common immediate reaction. You may feel numb or disoriented, and may have trouble concentrating.
- Symptoms of depression, including disturbed sleep, loss of appetite, intense sadness, and lack of energy.
- Anger towards the deceased, a perpetrator, another family member, a therapist, or yourself.
- Relief, particularly if there was a suicide following a long and difficult mental illness.
- Guilt, including thinking, "If only I had...."
- These feelings usually diminish over time, asyou develop your ability to cope and begin to heal.

#### WHAT DO I DO NOW?

- You may find that it helps to reach out to family and friends. Because some people may not know what to say, you may need to take the initiative to talk about the suicide or gun violence, share your feelings, and ask for their help.
- Even though it may seem difficult, maintaining contact with other people is especially important during the stressfilled months after a loved one's death.
- Keep in mind that each person grieves in his or her own way. Some people visit the cemetery weekly; others find it too painful to go at all.
- Each person also grieves at his or her own pace; there is no set rhythm or timeline for healing.

"One learns to live with the loss, the tragedy, the waste, and the gaping hole in the fabric of one's life.

There is no closure, nor would I want one. I want to remember him all my life, vividly: his laughter, the smell of his sneakers under his bed, his moments of joy, his humility, and his integrity."

- Anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays may be especially difficult, so you might want
  to think about whether to continue old traditions or create some new ones. You may
  also experience unexpected waves of sadness; these are a normal part of the grieving
  process.
- Children experience many of the feelings of adult grief, and are particularly vulnerable to feeling abandoned and guilty. Reassure them that the death was not their fault. Listen to their questions, and try to offer honest, straightforward, age-appropriate answers
- Some survivors find comfort in community, religious, or spiritual activities, including talking to a trusted member of the clergy.
- Be kind to yourself. When you feel ready, begin to go on with your life. Eventually starting to enjoy life again is not a betrayal of your loved one, but rather a sign that you've begun to heal.

Excerpted from Surviving Suicide Loss: A Resource and Healing Guide.



# 2. Practical Coping Strategies

Encourage survivors to think about specific things they can do when intense emotions such as worry or sadness begin to well up, including:

- seeing a therapist or a group for survivors
- thinking about how they've coped with difficulties in the past and reminding themselves that they can use those same coping skills now
- for survivors of loss to gun violence, participating in relationships and shared concerns with other gun violence survivors for support and action groups
- simple relaxation and distraction skills, such as taking three deep slow breaths, counting to 10, or picturing themselves in a favorite calm and relaxing place
- exercising, journaling
- writing a list of people they can turn to for support
- writing a list of things they're looking forward to
- focusing on individual goals, such as returning to a class or church, or spending time with mutual friends

### 3. Being Present With Those Who Grieve

Suggestions for writing a note:

- Keep it brief and simple
- Communicate your support and care
- Share memories of the bereaved, affirm the grieving process and/or communicate appreciation for their life
- Write what you are feeling in your heart.

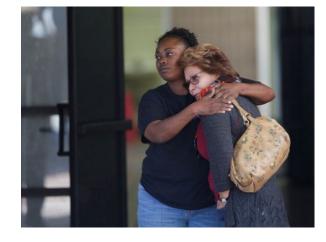
EXAMPLE:
----------

I was so sad to learn al	oout your loss of	I can't imagine your pain right
now. I hope that with time	e memories of warmth a	and joy may rise to the forefront of your
mind. Please know that my	y heart and prayers are v	with you during this emotional time. If
you need any help cooking	g, answering the phone,	helping with the kids, or anything else,
please don't hesitate to call	l. I'll call you in a couple	e weeks when things have calmed
down.		
With love,	Your phone number	r

## 4. Reminders about being with those who grieve:

- Be a good listener and affirm the feelings of the bereaved—if they are sad, angry, or happy
- Silence is okay.
- Let them guide you in their needs—they might want to tell a story, hear a joke, or have some-one sit with them while they cry. People grieve differently and they may grieve differently than you. In the aftermath of gun violence grief, some may want to join in a gun violence prevention group and some may not.
- Offer practical help.
  - It doesn't all depend on you—the blessing of living in community is that different people can offer care in different ways.
  - Be patient!—everyone goes through their own process in their own time.
  - Remember that holidays are hard, as is the first anniversary of the death.

Keeping checking in with them in the months ahead.



# Section 3 Take Action!

# "Common Sense" Gun Legislation

#### What would that look like?

"The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof. What I want is so simple I almost can't say it: elementary kindness. Enough to eat, enough to go around. The possibility that kids might one day grow up to be neither the destroyers nor the destroyed. That's about it. Right now I'm living in that hope, running down its hallway and touching the walls on both sides."

-Barbara Kingsolver, Animal Dreams

On a recent Facebook conversation, a friend of a friend asked, "I see references to common sense gun legislation. What would that look like?" He seemed sincere and genuinely interested in the answer. In the hope of answering his question, we offer this list. It is not meant to be comprehensive, but we do hope it offers some vision for concrete steps that would move us away from the current cycle of endless violence, trauma, injury and death we are now experiencing on a daily basis. Most of these are aspirational. In all likelihood, they are not going to be enacted by Congress in the current political situation, and perhaps not for decades to come. Still, the very least we can do is to figure out what we hope for – and then live and work inside that hope.

- Oppose expanded concealed carry reciprocity legislation, which seeks to turn our houses of worship into congregations armed with guns and weaponry.
- Establish universal background checks and close the private sale loophole.
- Repeal the Dickey Amendment and restore funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for research on gun violence.
- Close the Charleston loophole, which permits federally licensed dealers to sell guns if three business days pass without a verdict from the FBI.
- Ban the purchase and sale of assault weapons.
- Enact a gun violence restraining order law, which would temporarily prohibit an individual from purchasing or possessing firearms when deemed by a judge to pose a danger to self or others.
- Ban the purchase and sale of high capacity ammunition magazines.
- Oppose legislative efforts to deregulate the purchase and sale of gun silencers.
- Close the boyfriend loophole, which allows convicted abusers and stalkers to buy and own firearms.

This list is for federal legislation. The priorities in your state may be different. This link (<a href="https://everytownresearch.org">https://everytownresearch.org</a>) offers a state-by-state perspective that allows you to compare the strength of state gun laws, track trends over time, and identify gaps in the gun laws of your state. If you want to be a part of the effort to act against gun violence, this article (<a href="https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/stop-gun-violence-get-organized-and-get-vocal">https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/stop-gun-violence-get-organized-and-get-vocal</a>) offers a good list of organizations where you might want to plug in.

# Offering of Letters

## Worship Service for Gun Violence Prevention

The Offering of Letters Service was created for the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship by Rev. Sara Dorrien-Christians.

#### **OPTIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD**

For congregations already committed to preventing gun violence, use the worship outline below. You could invite members of the Presbytery and other local churches to join you for the service. After the service, invite those who are interested in learning more or committing to action to meet immediately following the service or a week later at a predetermined location. As a group, work your way through PPF's "Gun Violence Prevention Curriculum" or Jim Atwood's book, "America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé," using the study guide questions created by Jan Orr-Harter. (See this Toolkit, Educational Resources)

For congregations who are committed to reform but want to learn a little more before offering their letters in a worship service, you might want to screen the 54 minute movie *Trigger*, followed immediately by an "Offering of Letters" Worship Service. (See Toolkit Educational Resources) After the service, invite those who are interested in learning more or committing to action to meet a week later at a predetermined location. As a group, work your way through PPF's "Gun Violence Prevention Curriculum" or Jim Atwood's book, "America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé," using the study guide questions.

For congregations that aren't as familiar with the issue and need more time to learn, digest, and discern how they are called to respond, you might plan a screening of the movie *Trigger* OR an educational session using PPF's "Gun Violence Prevention Curriculum," Session # 1. After the meeting, explain what the Offering of Letters worship service is, and provide the participants with the sample letter. Invite the participants to join you for the service, set at a later date. If they feel called to do so, they may write their letters in advance or write them within the service itself. Then hold the Offering of Letters Service, as outlined below, and afterwards invite those who are interested in learning more or committing to action to meet a week later at a predetermined location. As a group, work your way through PPF's "Gun Violence Prevention" Curriculum or Jim Atwood's book, "America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé," using the study guide questions.



# Outline for OFFERING OF LETTERS SAMPLE SERVICE

Call to Worship

(1.John 3:18)

One: Little children, let us love, not in word or speech,

Many: but in truth and action.

One: Let us worship God.

OR

(Luke 1:78-79)

One: By the tender mercy of our God,

Many: the dawn from on high will break upon us.

One: Giving light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

Many: to guide our feet into the way of peace.

#### Opening Hymn

#### Call to Confession:

Friends, we are reminded constantly that Rachel still weeps for her children. Our hearts are heavy as we consider those who are wounded and die this very week, this very day, this very hour on our city streets, in our schools, and in our homes. We have hurt each other by our action, and by our inaction. In penitence and in abiding faith for our world made whole, let us confess our sin before God and neighbor. Let us pray.

#### Prayer of Confession:

God of justice and of grace, sometimes we feel far from bearing your image. Although we can sense that things are not right, we prize the comfort of familiarity over the risk of the unknown. Although we know the numbers and statistics, they largely remain just that, failing to leave an imprint on our heart and conscience. We *hear* but we don't listen, *see* but we don't behold, *feel* but we don't act.

# In your steadfast kindness and mercy, forgive us. Hasten us to know ourselves as claimed in spite of our darkness, and free us to be agents of your peace. Amen.

OR (especially for services NOT proceeded by a screening of *Trigger* or any educational forum)

#### Prayer of Confession:

*One:* God of justice and of grace, sometimes we feel far from bearing your image. 90 people die of every day from gun violence in the U.S. 10 of these are children. Lord, in your mercy,

#### Many: Forgive us.

One: God of justice and of grace, sometimes we feel far from bearing your image. The U.S. rate of firearms deaths for children is twelve times higher than 25 other industrialized nations combined. Lord, in your mercy,

#### Many: Forgive us.

*One:* God of justice and of grace, sometimes we feel far from bearing your image. 30,000 Americans die from guns every year in the U.S. This is far more than the total of servicemen and women killed in the war in Iraq. Lord, in your mercy,

#### Many: Forgive us.

*One:* God of justice and of grace, sometimes we feel far from bearing your image. 40% of the guns bought in the United States are bought from private sellers, mostly at Gun Shows. Neither background checks nor firearms safety classes are required in these private exchanges. Lord, in

yourmercy,

Many: Forgive us.

*Words of Assurance* (The Minister may use the words that are most familiar to him/her)

**Prayer for Illumination**: God, it is by the power of your Spirit that these words still live. Subordinate in us any voice but your own, and grant us understanding.

**The Word Read** (A list of scripture suggestions can be found below)

#### The Word Proclaimed

(Because time needs to be left for the Offering of Letters, the message should be on the shorter side, about 10 minutes.)

#### Offering of Letters

#### Introduction

(At this point, a worship leader should introduce the offering, explaining where to find the sample letter in the bulletin, the list of congressional representatives and their addresses, and the envelopes. He/She should also make it clear that if a worshipper does not finish his or her letter within the time allotted, they may finish it and add it to the plate after worship. Those who do not feel called to offer a letter at this time should be acknowledged, affirmed, and invited to use the time for prayer or meditation.)

#### Letter-writing

(Instrumental music, so as not to distract, may be played. This should take approximately 10 minutes.)

Procession of the Letters (Music: Canticle of the Turning)

(As they are led, worshippers should take their letters to the offering plates at the front of the sanctuary. Ushers may pick up letters for those confined to their seats. Instructions of this sort should be included in the bulletin and/or stated in the introduction.)

#### Prayer of Dedication:

God, it is by your grace that we offer our voices in praise and in service. In your infinite wisdom and love, accept and use our offerings in service to your indwelling kingdom, that they may be one step toward making your world more whole. Amen.

#### Closing Hymn

**Charge and Benediction:** (Ephesians 3:18-20)

One: I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Many: Now to God, who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly more than all we can ask or imagine, to God be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

# WHAT YOU'LL NEED for the Offering of Letters Service

- 1. Review Worship, Scripture and Hymn suggestions in this Toolkit
- 2. Include the following items in your bulletin:
- a. A list of relevant Senators or Representatives from your district with their addresses.

To determine relevancy, consider the following:

-What district/districts are likely to be represented by those gathered? Is it more beneficial to write to a Congressional Representative or a Senator right now?

- b. Paper to write on, a pen, a stamped envelope.
- c. A Sample Letter. (See below.)

# **SAMPLE LETTER**

(Date)
Dear Senator,
Greetings! My name is I write as a concerned citizen and as a follower of Jesus Christ. Recent, violent events in our country have made it clear that the time for action to reduce gun violence is now. I urge you, Senator/Representative, to support and pass sensible gun control measures that will save lives. 33,000 Americans are killed every year by guns. That includes 10 children per day. Even one is too many.
There are things we can do to prevent more deaths, and we must. I urge you, as our elected servant of the common good, to work especially for the passage of universal background checks and closure of the "gun show loophole" as well as the renewal of the ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Neither will infringe on the rights of responsible gun owners and both will keep us safer.
(If you have a personal story to share, insert it here. Be brief and honest.)
Jesus said, "Blessed are the Peacemakers." As a follower of him, I strive to fulfill that calling every day, and I will continue to advocate for that which creates peace in our society. I urge you to join me in this mission, following whatever or whomever it is that compels you to live in light of love instead of fear.
Sincerely,

# Connecting with Others

### National Groups & Contacts in all 50 States

There are many ways to get involved in preventing gun violence. You can start a group or chapter in your church or with others in your community. Below we list national groups, as well as a contact in each state, someone already working near you on this issue. These groups work together on significant anniversaries, such as the 5th anniversary of the Newtown School Shooting in Dec. 2017 and the anniversary of the Orlando Nightclub shooting on June 12. Many groups provide resources for "National Gun Violence Awareness Day" in June and for holding "Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath" in your community on various days throughout the year. Please help us add to and update this list. Email suggestions to: JanOH4@aol.com

<u>Coalition to Stop Gun Violence</u> - <a href="http://www.csgv.org">http://www.csgv.org</a> Founded in 1974 and based in Washington DC, a coalition of 47 national organizations working together to prevent gun violence. The Presbyterian Church (USA) is a member and Presbyterian author Rev. Jim Atwood is on the national board of directors.

**Everytown for Gun Safety** - <a href="http://www.everytown.org">http://www.everytown.org</a> 646-324-8250 Based in NY, NY, created from a merger in 2013 of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Everytown has contacts in every state in the US. Moms Demand Action sponsors the Gun Sense Action Network in every state and the Mother's Dream Quilt Project. Everytown promotes National Gun Violence Awareness Day in June, asking Americans to wear orange and to create local events to raise awareness.

**Gun Sense Action Network** - https://act.everytown.org/signup/GSAN\_teams\_signup A program sponsored by **Everytown for Gun Safety**. This is a network of callers that either help to welcome new members to Moms Demand Action or help call members in states that have a campaign or legislative action. The calling can be done from home for 1-2 hours per week.

**Throw Them Out** - https://everytown.org/throwthemout An Action Plan from **Everytown for Gun Safety** to Kick out Lawmakers Beholden to the Gun Lobby. Lawmakers have had enough time to come around to common sense, and we're done waiting. We must now elect leaders who will finally act to save lives from gun violence.

Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence - <a href="http://www.bradycampaign.org">http://www.bradycampaign.org</a> 202-370-8100 Founded by Jim and Sarah Brady and sponsor of the Million Mom March in 2000, the Brady Campaign has launched a goal to cut American gun deaths in half by 2025 through a combination of public policy, safety and public awareness changes. Based in Washington DC, they also sponsor the Legal Action Project to use the court system to support sensible gun policy. With 94 chapters across the US, they maintain an on-line map that shows local affiliates across the nation. Their website offer worship resources under "God not Guns."

States United to Prevent Gun Violence - http://www.ceasefireusa.org or http://www.supgv.org

Established in 2010 to create a 50 state solution on gun violence. Based in NY,NY, States United maintains a clearinghouse of 31 states so far, with groups working together on gun violence prevention. They can help you get started in your state. Their website also offers a quick check on which popular investment funds are profiting from the gun and ammunition industry and how to find a fund that isn't.

#### Americans for Responsible Solutions - http://www.americansforresponsiblesolutions.org

Founded by Gabby Gifford and Mark Kelly in 2012, ARS sponsors education, advocacy and a significant Political Action Committee (PAC). ARS has merged with the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, which has

worked for over 20 years to mobilize lawyers to help strengthen gun laws. The Law Center maintains an on-line resource and scorecard on the gun laws in each of the US states. Click on your state to find current regulations. www.smartgunlaws.org/search-gun-law-by-state

#### <u>Violence Policy Center</u> - <a href="http://www.vpc.org/">http://www.vpc.org/</a>

The Violence Policy Center does investigation and analytical work to provide accurate statistics on gun violence, information on the gun industry and steps to prevent gun violence.

**The Newtown Action Alliance** - <a href="http://www.alliance.newtownaction.org">http://www.alliance.newtownaction.org</a> Founded in Newtown, CT after the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, the Newtown Alliance exists to "provide comfort, education, scholarship and other support and resources to people and communities impacted by or living in the aftermath of gun violence in American society, and to help them lead the way toward positive cultural change."

**Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence** - <a href="http://www.faithsunited.org">http://www.faithsunited.org</a> Over 50 national religious groups working together to sponsor Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath each year and other mutual projects to lessen the grip of gun violence and the gun industry on America. Their website "Other Resources" includes an excellent *Gun Violence Guide for Faith Leaders*.

<u>National Gun Violence Victims Action Council</u> – <a href="http://www.gunvictimsaction.org">http://www.gunvictimsaction.org</a> After originating action to compel Starbucks to change their gun policy, NGVAC works to involve economic power and corporate behavior to change the gun violence culture in America.

**Gun Violence Archive** - <a href="http://www.gunviolencearchive.org">http://www.gunviolencearchive.org</a> The GVA provides free public access to accurate reporting on gun-related incidents in America. Not an advocacy group, GVA gathers near real-time data from over 2,000 media, law enforcement, government and commercial sources daily. Results are published at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/gunviolencearchive">www.facebook.com/gunviolencearchive</a>

#### State Contacts:

**Alabama** Contact www.momsdemandaction.org to connect with their AL chapter

http://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionAL

**Alaska** We are Anchorage <a href="http://www.weareanchorage.org">http://www.weareanchorage.org</a>

**Arizona** Arizonans for Gun Safety <a href="http://www.azfgs.com">http://www.azfgs.com</a> 9920 S. Rural Rd,

Suite 108, PMB #36, Tempe, AZ 85284 602-547-0976 info@AZFGS.com

Arkansas Stop the Violence, PO Box 94578, North Little Rock, 501-351-1066

walter.crockran@lrsd.org

Brady Campaign of Arkansas, Diane Bunten, centralarkansas@bradymail.org

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Kathleen Hills, Little Rock h.kathleen@gmail.com

**California** Women Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.wagv.org">http://www.wagv.org</a> Los Angeles, CA 90034 (310) 204-2348 University of California at Davis Violence Prevention Research Program

http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/vprp

**Colorado** Colorado Ceasefire http://www.coloradoceasefire.org

Colorado Progress Now http://www.progressnowcolorado.org

Hunters Against Gun Violence http://www.huntersagainstgunviolence.com

Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence <a href="http://www.cfcu-co.org">http://www.cfcu-co.org</a>

Connecticut Connecticut Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.cagv.org">http://www.cagv.org</a> 203-955-1009 <a href="info@cagv.org">info@cagv.org</a> Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Hartford, CT. (Stand Up- Speak Out)

Mothers United Against Violence, Hartford, CT Nancy Kirchmyer, 860-228-4390 or 860-670-4078 or nkirchmyer@hotmail.com

**Delaware** Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.decagv.org">http://www.decagv.org</a>

**Florida** Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, founded by the League of Women Voters following the Pulse Nightclub massacre, the worst mass shooting in American history <a href="http://www.preventgunviolenceflorida.org">http://www.preventgunviolenceflorida.org</a> pbrighamlwvoc@gmail.com 850-224-2545

**Georgia** Georgians for Gun Safety <a href="http://www.gunsafetygeorgia.org">http://www.gunsafetygeorgia.org</a> PO Box 55099
Atlanta, GA 30308 404-483-9745

**Hawaii** Hawaii Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence <a href="http://www.facebook.com/Hawaii-Coalition-to-Prevent-Gun-Violence-1431037223812676/">http://www.facebook.com/Hawaii-Coalition-to-Prevent-Gun-Violence-1431037223812676/</a>

**Idaho** Contact <a href="http://www.momsdemandaction.org">http://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionID</a> to connect with their ID chapter <a href="http://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionID">http://www.facebook.com/MomsDemandActionID</a>

Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, founded 1975. <a href="http://www.ichv.org">http://www.ichv.org</a>
22 S. Morgan Street, Suite 4A Chicago, IL 60607—312. 243. ICHV (4248)
Cure Violence <a href="http://www.cureviolence.org">http://www.cureviolence.org</a>

Indiana Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence <a href="http://www.hcgv.org">http://www.hcgv.org</a>
PO Box 40265 Indianapolis, IN 46240 info@hcgv.org

**Iowa** Iowans for Gun Safety <a href="http://www.facebook.com/IA4GS">http://www.facebook.com/IA4GS</a> (515) 402-8973

**Kansas** Grandparents Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.moksgagv.wildapricot.org">http://www.moksgagv.wildapricot.org</a> info@moksgagv.org
P.O. Box 11193 Overland Park, KS 66207

**Kentucky** Sowers of Justice Network, Louisville <a href="http://www.sowersofjusticenetwork.org">http://www.sowersofjusticenetwork.org</a>
Doug Lowry <a href="mailto:info@sowersofjustice.org">info@sowersofjustice.org</a>

**Louisiana** Contact http://www.momsdemandaction.org to connect with their LA chapter

**Maine** Maine Gun Safety Coalition <a href="http://www.mainegunsafety.org">http://www.mainegunsafety.org</a>
PO Box 92, Portland, ME 207-780-0501

**Maryland** Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence http://www.mdpgv.org

Massachusetts Stop Handgun Violence http://www.stophandgunviolence.org

Michigan Coalition for Common Ground <a href="https://www.facebook.com/CCGKZOO/">https://www.facebook.com/CCGKZOO/</a>

Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence 517-927-8392

http://www.facebook.com/MichiganCoalitiontoPreventGunViolence

Minnesota Protect Minnesota <a href="http://www.protectmn.org">http://www.protectmn.org</a> St. Paul, MN 55114 (651) 645-3271

**Mississippi** Contact <a href="http://www.momsdemandaction.org">http://www.facebook.com/momsdemandaction.org</a> to connect with their MS chapter <a href="http://www.facebook.com/momsdemandactionms">http://www.facebook.com/momsdemandactionms</a>

Missouri (and Kansas) Grandparents Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.moksgagv.org">http://www.moksgagv.org</a>
info@moksgagv.org
P.O. Box 11193 Overland Park, KS 66207

**Montana** BigSkyRising@groups.facebook.com

Jeanette Rankin Peace Center, Missoula, MT <a href="http://www.jrpc.org">http://www.jrpc.org</a> 406-543-3955

**Nebraska** Nebraskans Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.nebraskansagainstgunviolence.org">http://www.nebraskansagainstgunviolence.org</a> info@nagv.org **Nevada** Nevadans for Background Checks <a href="http://www.safenevada.org">http://www.safenevada.org</a>

**New Hampshire** Granite State Progress <a href="http://www.facebook.com/granite.progress/zandra@granitestateprogress.org">http://www.facebook.com/granite.progress/zandra@granitestateprogress.org</a>

**New Jersey** Cease Fire NJ http://www.peacecoalition.org/campaigns/ceasefire.html

**New Mexico** New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence <a href="http://www.newmexicanstopreventgunviolence.org">http://www.newmexicanstopreventgunviolence.org</a> mviscoli@yahoo.com <a href="http://www.newmexicanstopreventgunviolence.org">NMTPGV@gmail.com</a>

https://www.facebook.com/NewMexicansForGunSafety?fre=ts

**New York** New Yorkers Against Gun Violence http://www.nyagv.org

87 Lafayette Street, 3rd floor, NY, NY 10013 nyagv@nyagv.org 212-679-2345

Buffalo: Paul McQuillen PaulMcQEsq@nyagv.org

Hudson Valley: Alexandra Dubroff Alex@nyagv.org

Capital Region: Pat Tuz Pat@nyagv.org
Utica: David Roefaro David@nyagv.org

North Carolina North Carolinians Against Gun Violence http://www.ncgv.org

North Dakota Contact http://www.momsdemandaction.org to connect with their ND chapter

**Ohio** Ohio Cease Fire http://www.ohioceasefire.org (614) 769-7386 (419) 244-7442

info@ohioceasefire.org Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence P.O. Box 16836 Columbus, OH 43216

God Before Guns http://www.godbeforeguns.org

**Oklahoma** OK Gun Sense http://www.facebook.com/groups/527444644007433/

**Oregon** Cease Fire Oregon <a href="http://www.ceasefireoregon.org">http://www.ceasefireoregon.org</a> 503.451.3630 <a href="info@ceasefireoregon.org">info@ceasefireoregon.org</a>

**Pennsylvania** CeaseFire PA <a href="http://www.ceasefirepa.org">http://www.ceasefirepa.org</a> P.O. Box 60095, Philadelphia, PA 19102 <a href="mailto:info@ceasefirepa.org">info@ceasefirepa.org</a> (215) 923-3151

**Rhode Island** Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence <a href="http://www.ricagv.org">http://www.ricagv.org</a> ricoalitionagainstgunviolence@gmail.com

**South Carolina** South Carolinians for Responsible Gun Ownership <a href="http://gunsensesc.org">http://gunsensesc.org</a> <a href="gunsensesc@gmail.com">gunsensesc@gmail.com</a>

**South Dakota** Contact http://www.momsdemandaction.org to connect with their SD chapter

**Tennessee** Safe Tennessee Project <a href="http://www.safetennesseeproject.org/">http://www.safetennesseeproject.org/</a>

**Texas** Texas Gun Sense <a href="http://www.txgunsense.org">http://www.txgunsense.org</a> P.O. Box 9297 Austin, TX 78766 <a href="mailto:andrea@txgunsense.org">andrea@txgunsense.org</a> 512) 565-4480

**Utah** Gun Violence Prevention Center of Utah <a href="http://www.gvpc.org">http://www.gvpc.org</a>

Gun Sense Utah <a href="http://www.facebook.com/GUNSENSE.ACTION">http://www.facebook.com/GUNSENSE.ACTION</a>

**Vermont** Gun Sense Vermont <a href="http://www.gunsensevt.org">http://www.gunsensevt.org</a> <a href="mailto:info@gunsensevt.org">info@gunsensevt.org</a>

**Virginia** Virginia Center for Public Safety http://www.vacps.org Norfolk, VA info@vacps.org

**Washington** Washington CeaseFire http://www.washingtonceasefire.org

West Virginia Dee Price Childers, http://www.MomsDemandAction.org

**Wisconsin** Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort <a href="http://www.wisconsinceasefire.org">http://www.wisconsinceasefire.org</a>

**Wyoming** Contact <a href="http://www.momsdemandaction.org">http://www.facebook.com/momsdemandaction.org</a> to connect with their WY chapter <a href="http://www.facebook.com/momsdemandaction.org">http://www.facebook.com/momsdemandaction.org</a>

# Tell Kroger We Want #GroceriesNotGuns

### from Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Kroger, the largest grocery chain in the United States, has policies that allow customers to openly carry guns in its stores. Numerous shootings and gun rallies have taken place at Kroger brand stores in recent years. The company policies that have enabled this to happen are not in line with its core values, which include creating a "safe and secure workplace and shopping environment." Most states have weak gun laws that let people openly carry guns even if they haven't had a background check or training. **Private businesses like Kroger have the responsibility to protect their customers when the law won't. Here are some actions you can take on this issue:** 

#### Call Kroger's regional offices and tell them you want #GroceriesNotGuns

Fred Meyer - 1-888-907-7125

Fry's Food Stores - 1-888-897-0086

Ralphs - 1-888-833-7032

King Soopers/City Market- 1-888-789-9051

Dillons, Gerbes, Baker's and Food 4 Less - 1-888-

894-9767

Harris Teeter - 1-888-997-6541

OFC - 1-888-433-0140

Smith's Food - 1-888-997-3512

Kroger (GA) - 1-888-728-4576

Kroger (IN/IL) - 1-888-490-1985

Kroger (Cincinnati) - 1-888-997-3448

Kroger (TN, AR, MS) - 1-888-998-1793

Kroger (Mid-Atlantic) - 1-888-659-9340

Kroger (Mid-South) - 1-888-885-4011

Kroger (TX) - 1-888-913-7896



#### Sign the petition

Urge Kroger to adopt common-sense gun policies to protect families who shop in its stores. Sign at <a href="https://act.everytown.org/sign/kroger-petition">https://act.everytown.org/sign/kroger-petition</a>.

#### Tweet at Kroger

Visit <a href="https://momsdemandaction.org/ft\_groceriesnotguns/">https://momsdemandaction.org/ft\_groceriesnotguns/</a> for a Fast Tweet tool from Mom's Demand Action.

### Shop at Kroger competitors that have gun sense

Do your grocery shopping at a store that has stood up for customer safety by prohibiting open carry.

Stores with gun sense policies include:

- Costco
- Fiesta Mart
- Food Lion
- The Fresh Market
- Giant
- HEB

- New Seasons Market
- Safeway
- Sprouts Farmers Market
- Target
- Trader Joe's
- Whole Foods

#### Avoid shopping at these locations when possible:



# Additional Resources

# From BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz

- **Gun Violence Prevention Toolkit**: A section of our website with more responses, resources, and tools on gun violence prevention: <a href="www.bpfna.org/mobilize/resource-kits#gv">www.bpfna.org/mobilize/resource-kits#gv</a>
- Issue Monograph: What Your Congregation Can Do About Gun Violence: www.bpfna.org/mobilize/issue-monographs
- **Postcards:** Print off your own BPFNA ~ Bautistas por la Paz postcards to let your members of congress know gun violence is an important issue to you: www.bpfna.org/bpfnaresist#postcard
- Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship: Recently updated, this resource provides educational resources, pastoral resources, action tools, case studies, worship materials, and more! <a href="http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/resources">http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/resources</a>



Find this Toolkit On-Line or in Print: Download Free PDF or Order Print Copies at: <a href="https://www.bpfna.org/mobilize/resources.">www.bpfna.org/mobilize/resources</a>.

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www.bpfna.org/donate

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Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Inc.

Witnessing to God's peace rooted in justice ~ working together until it comes. / Testificando sobre la paz de Dios enraizada en justicia ~ Trabajando hasta que llegue.

# **Contact Us**

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