

  
**Interfaith Action**  
SW Michigan Peace & Justice Collaborative

**104 Mount Tabor Road, Buchanan, MI 49107**

**GUN VIOLENCE  
REDUCTION SABBATH  
A RESOURCE PACKET**



**Wear ORANGE on June 4th-6th, 2021**

**GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION SABBATH**  
**A RESOURCE PACKET**  
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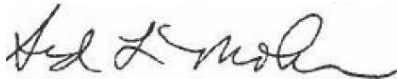
## INTERFAITH ACTION STATEMENTS

### A Letter from the Director of Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action of SW Michigan joins in mourning the deaths of those victimized by gun violence in Atlanta and Boulder. The time for prayers must give way to action to pass legislation to ban all assault weapons and pass stringent and universal background checks for gun purchases.

The US is unique in the western world for its epidemic levels of gun violence. We, as people of faith, are committed to developing a society known for peace and a society that is committed to reducing gun-related deaths.

We call on our elected officials to take action now. We've had sufficient tragedies to raise the alarm; as people of faith we declare that now is the time to pass gun violence legislation.



**Rev. Dr. Sid Mohn**

*Director, Interfaith Action of SW Michigan*

*March 25, 2021*

## **Enough is Enough**

As Chair of Interfaith Action of SW Michigan, I'm writing in response to the recent gun violence deaths of eight individuals in Indianapolis. Enough is enough.

In the past month, we've experienced the following horrors:

- in mid March eight people were murdered by a mass shootout in Atlanta;
- less than a week later, ten people were killed in a grocery store in Boulder;
- at the end of March, four people (including a nine year old boy) were killed at a real estate office in Southern California, and
- last week, six people were shot and murdered at a home in Rock Hill, SC.

And now Indianapolis. Enough is enough. We call on Congress to pass gun safety legislation - including a ban on assault and automatic weapons and universal background checks including for private individual sellers.

This is a start - as we know that only one in 400 gun related deaths is a result of mass shootings (deaths involving 4 or more individuals). But we have to start somewhere - and then move on to confront the totality of gun related deaths in our country.

As communities of faith, we value the sanctity of life and we work for peace in our communities. Gun violence is a threat to those values. \*

### **The Rev. Susan Greenwood**

*Chair, Interfaith Action of SW Michigan*

*April 28, 2021*

*Since the writing of this the following shootings have occurred:*

<i>Gresham, OR</i>	<i>Stockton CA</i>
<i>Orange CA</i>	<i>River Grove IL</i>
<i>Chicago IL</i>	<i>Indianapolis IN</i>
<i>Boulder CO</i>	<i>Memphis TN</i>
<i>Aliceville MS</i>	<i>Dallas TX</i>
<i>Yazoo City MS</i>	<i>Houston TX</i>
<i>Cleveland OH</i>	<i>Atlanta GA</i>
<i>Essex MD</i>	<i>Philadelphia PA</i>
<i>Baltimore MD</i>	<i>Washington DC</i>
<i>Norfolk VA</i>	<i>Virginia Beach VA</i>
<i>Wilmington NC</i>	<i>Kenosha WI</i>
<i>Austin TX</i>	<i>Minneapolis MN</i>
<i>Columbus OH</i>	

## LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sisters and Brothers in faith,

It is with a sense of urgency that we invite you and your house of faith to join in the movement to create a safe environment for all as we consider our faith response to the issue of gun violence in our country.

With that in mind, and with Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath weekend approaching (always the first weekend of June) we offer you these materials in order to help make your means of addressing the issue a little simpler.

Each time there is a mass shooting (or any shooting for that matter) there is a need for faith communities to not only speak out, but to provide spiritual support for its members.

We hope that you will find these materials helpful and that, as you use them, you would please be so kind as to let us know how you used them and what worked best for you as we continue to refine them for future use.

Peace,

**The Rev. Diane Pike, Rector**

*Southwest Michigan Episcopal Covenant of Parishes*

**The Rev. Karen Joy Kelly**

*Episcopal Priest, retired*

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Shalom.

As a representative of Temple B’Nai Shalom, I support the efforts of Interfaith Action to reduce gun violence. Judaism sharply restricts the use of violence, and nonviolence often becomes the only way to fulfilling a life of truth, justice and peace, which Judaism considers to be the three tools for the preservation of the world.

The Talmud explains, "The entire Torah is for the sake of the ways of shalom". As such we as Jews are concerned about the gun violence and gun related deaths that are devastating our communities. We are a people of Shalom and we pray that peace will overcome the plague of gun violence.

**Laura Kovnat**

*Temple B’Nai Shalom*

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As Muslims, we are encouraged to strive for peace and peaceful solutions to all problems. Our Faith calls us to work against violence in our community and we are concerned about the level of gun violence that is devastating our society. We support efforts to end gun deaths and appreciate Interfaith Actions work in gun violence reduction.

**Imam Mustafa EISayed**

*Islamic Association of SW Michigan*

**THE WITNESS OF HOLY BOOKS**  
**(Scriptures Proclaiming Peace)**

“All who live by the sword will die by the sword.” (*Matthew 26.52*)

“Be amongst the students of Aaron: Love peace and pursue peace. Love people and bring them close to Torah.” (*Pirkei Avot 1.12*)

“Without understanding, people become beasts and demons. [But] when one’s light merges into the Light, and one’s awareness is joined with Awareness, then one’s cruel and violent instincts and egotism depart; skepticism and sorrow are taken away.” (*Guru GranthSahib*)

“Good and evil deeds are not alike. Repel evil with good, and he who is your enemy will become like a dear friend.” *Q’uran 41.34, surat “Fussilat”*)

“Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” (*Psalms 34.14*)

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.” (*Matthew 5.9*)

## HOW CAN PEOPLE OF FAITH BE INVOLVED?

1. Pray for peace in our homes and our communities, and that we will end the horror of gun violence.
2. Open your worship space to be a gathering place immediately following a national mass shooting or one in your own community. Hold a Candlelight Vigil.
3. Deliver a sermon calling for faith-inspired action during your weekend worship service.
4. Organize a discussion exploring how faith's teachings compel believers to action on issues such as gun-violence reduction.
5. Organize a reading of the names of gun victims in your place of worship.
6. Research "Heeding God's Call", a faith-based campaign for gun-violence prevention: [www.heedinggodscall.org](http://www.heedinggodscall.org)
7. Write your US Congressional Representatives.  
House- [www.house.gov/representatives/find](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find)  
Senate- [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) (*click state link in upper right corner*)
8. Let your local and state elected officials know that you are committed to gun violence reduction.
9. Educate families and youth about gun safety and storage.
10. Ask your local police to make a presentation on gun safety and gun violence prevention
11. Make your worship space a gun-free facility.
12. Participate in Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath (the first weekend in June) and encourage your community to **WEAR ORANGE**



## **OTHER GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION SABBATH IDEAS**

1. Create bulletin inserts to announce Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath (or use the ones included in this kit.)
2. Encourage the congregation to wear orange as a message of support for the reduction of Gun Violence.
  - a. Orange t-shirts are readily available or special shirts can be ordered through <https://www.store.everytown.org/products/wear-orange>
  - b. Orange stoles for clergy are available through a number of sources; available inexpensively through Amazon.

*Orange is the color that Hadiya Pendleton’s friends wore in her honor when she was shot and killed in Chicago at the age of 15, just one week after performing at President Obama’s second inaugural parade in 2013. After her death, they asked us to stand up, speak out, and wear orange to raise awareness about gun violence.*

*Since then, orange has been the defining color of the gun violence prevention movement. It is also the color for hunters, signifying “don’t shoot me.”*

3. Use special prayers and/or liturgy on the Sabbath to remember those who have died due to shootings. (Prayers and liturgies are included in this packet)
4. Preach a sermon on God’s love and the need to end this violence.

## RESOURCES FOR FAITH COMMUNITY WORSHIP SERVICES

For those faith communities who will be commemorating Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath the weekend of June 4th-6th, the following are resources that can be used for worship services.

### **BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT**

*An announcement for the bulletin that describes June 4th - 6th as Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath.*

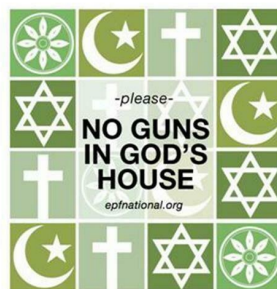
The first week of June is commemorated as Gun Violence Awareness Week; June 4th-6th is celebrated in faith communities around the US as Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath — a time to mourn those whose lives have been lost to gun violence and to recommit to building communities of peace and safety. We are including inserts that you may use each of the four weeks preceding June 6<sup>th</sup>. These inserts contain messaging and prayers for gun violence reduction, and a reminder for everyone to wear orange on that day.

### **WEARING OF ORANGE**

**Clergy often wear orange stoles** on Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath, a symbol of “I’m a human don’t shoot me”, borrowing from the orange vests that hunters wear to indicate that no shooting should be directed towards them. Lay persons often wear orange as well.

### **DOOR SIGNAGE**

**Gun Free Zone stickers for houses of worship** are available for \$1/each from Episcopal Peace Fellowship or from Interfaith Action.



<https://epfnational.org/store/>

## LITURGICAL RESOURCES

### ***A Prayer for Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath:***

O Creator who remembers, we hold before you all who have died from the plague of gun violence in our land. We remember those who have taken their lives with a gun, those who have died in school shootings and mass shootings, those who have died by a gun in the course of an argument or from abuse or by accident or during the committing of a crime. We lift our voices in sorrow and frustration knowing that every life is infinitely valuable to you. Receive all who have died into the arms of your mercy, bless those who mourn with the hope of eternal life, and strengthen our hearts and our arms to bring an end to this scourge. This we pray in the name of the one who overcame the power of death. Amen.

Community Prayer (said in unison): Healing and Holy God: we gather today in common grief for the epidemic of gun violence. Be with all those who suffer from the lasting trauma incidents of gun violence leave in their wake. Grant us strength and courage to live in hope of a better day, our minds fixed on the doing of your will, so that we, having been delivered from fear, may live in peace. Amen.

### ***Sample liturgies that can be used:***

#### **Liturgy A:**

**Collect:** O God who Remembers, we hold before you all who have died from the plague of gun violence in our land. We remember those who have taken their lives with a gun, those who have died in school shootings and mass shootings, those who have died by a gun in the course of an argument or from abuse or by accident or during the commission of a crime. We lift our voices in sorrow and frustration knowing that every life is infinitely valuable to you. Receive all who have died into the arms of your mercy, bless those who mourn with the hope of eternal life, and strengthen our hearts and our arms to bring an end to this scourge. This we pray in the name of the one who overcame the power of death. Amen.

**Community Prayer** (said in unison): Healing and Holy God: we gather today in common grief for the epidemic of gun violence. Be with all those who suffer from the lasting trauma incidents of gun violence leave in their wake. Grant us strength and courage to live in hope of a better day, our minds fixed on the doing of your will, so that we, having been delivered from fear, may live in peace. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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**Liturgy B: A Litany for the Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath**

*(Adapted from a liturgy written by the Rt. Rev. Stephen T. Lane, former Episcopal Bishop of Maine)*

Leader (L): Giver of Life and Love, you created all people as one family and called us to live together in harmony and peace. Surround us with your love as we face the challenges and tragedies of gun violence.

For our dear ones, for our neighbors, for strangers and aliens, and those known to you alone, Loving God

**All: Make us instruments of your peace.**

L: God of Righteousness, you have given our leaders, especially Joseph, our President, and Gretchen, our Governor, the members of Congress, the judges of our courts and members of our legislatures, power and responsibility to protect us and to uphold our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

For all who bear such responsibility, for all who struggle to discern what is right in the face of powerful political forces, Loving God

**All: Make us instruments of your peace.**

L: God of Compassion, we give you thanks for first responders, for police officers, firefighters and EMTs, and all those whose duties bring them to the streets, the lobbies, the malls and the homes where the carnage of gun violence takes place day after day. Give them courage and sound judgment in the heat of the moment and grant them compassion for the victims.

For our brothers and sisters who risk their lives and their serenity as they rush to our aid, Loving God

**All: Make us instruments of your peace.**

L: Merciful God, bind up the wounds of all who suffer from gun violence, those maimed and disfigured, those left alone and grieving, and those who struggle to get through one more day. Bless them with your presence and help them find hope.

For all whose lives are forever marked by the scourge of gun violence, Loving God

**All: Make us instruments of your peace.**

L: God Who Remembers, may we not forget those who have died, more than 30,000 this year, in the gun violence that we have allowed to become routine. Receive them into your heart and comfort us with your promise of eternal love and care.

For all who have died, those who die today, and those who will die tomorrow, Loving God

**All: Make us instruments of your peace.**

L: God of Justice, help us, your church, find our voice. Empower us to change this broken world and to protest the needless deaths caused by gun violence. Give us power to rise above our fear that nothing can be done and grant us the conviction to advocate for change.

For your dream of love and harmony, Loving God

**All: Make us instruments of your peace.**

L: All this we pray in the name of the One who offered his life so that we might live, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

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**Liturgy C: Remembering All Who Have Been Affected ByGun Violence**

*(Adapted from Moral Call: a Vermont Interfaith Prayer and Remembrance Vigil, December 15, 2015)*

Leader: We raise our prayers in remembrance of the victims of gun violence, both those who have been injured and those who have been killed. We hold their memories dear. We treasure those lives permanently altered through injury or those taken in senseless acts of violence, and we pray that they might find rest and peace. May their lives continue to make a difference in our world. Together we pray.

**All: God of Mercy, heal our broken hearts.**

Leader: We raise our prayers in remembrance of the families and friends of the victims of gun violence in our nation and in Michigan. Comfort those who mourn. Dry the tears of those who weep. Sustain those who feel diminished. Impart courage to the hearts of those who feel helpless.

Together we pray.

**All: God of Peace, sustain our broken hearts.**

Leader: We raise our prayers in remembrance of schoolteachers and administrators who put their students' needs ahead of their own safety. We pray for first responders, including police, fire and rescue personnel who witness the horror of gun violence while in service to our communities, and we pray for all those with responsibility for law enforcement. We give thanks for their call to protect and serve and to seek justice, which is inspirational to others, and we pray that their emotional wounds will be healed. Together we pray.

**All: God of Courage, inspire our broken hearts.**

Leader: We raise our prayers for those lives taken by gun violence through suicide, and also for those lives taken through accidental shootings, especially when those shootings involve children. Console and strengthen those whose despair is great. Together we pray.

**All: God of Hope, comfort our broken hearts.**

Leader: We raise our prayers in remembrance of all people impacted by gun violence, as gun violence knows no boundaries but can affect all nationalities, races, cultures, faiths, genders, and socioeconomic classes; it can affect us where we live, where we worship, where we work, where we study, and where we play. Together we pray.

**All: God of Love, transform our broken hearts.**

Leader: We raise our prayers for those who have committed acts of gun violence and for their families, in our nation and especially here in Michigan. We remember those suffering from mental illness who have gone untreated, and those suffering from loneliness and isolation. We pray for those who would use guns, power and violence rather than respect and dignity to reconcile differences. Grant us the strength to pursue justice with a voice of love. Together we pray.

**All: God of Forgiveness, enlighten our broken hearts.**

Leader: We raise our prayers for all community leaders, elected officials and survivor groups. Give them insight, wisdom, and courage to address head on the epidemic of gun violence. Pour forth your Spirit on all our neighborhoods and break the chains of violence that bind your people. Together we pray.

**All: God of Power, strengthen our broken hearts.**

Leader: We pray today for ourselves and for others in our lives who have been touched by gun violence. During the silent pause, I invite you to offer the names (either silently or aloud) of those for whom you pray. (list names here)

Together we pray.

**All: God of Astonishing Mercy, Compassion and Immeasurable Love, restore our broken hearts and enliven our confidence to find new ways to revive our world to become one of peace. Amen**

## MUSICAL OPTIONS

*(Links to both songs are below. Both songs are in the public domain.)*

- **God of Mercy You Have Shown Us**
  - <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/god-alone-lord-coin-science/>
- **“If we just talk of thoughts and prayers”**
  - [http://www.carolynshymns.com/when\\_people\\_die\\_by\\_hatred.html](http://www.carolynshymns.com/when_people_die_by_hatred.html)

## **CHRISTIAN SERMON CONCEPTS**

*For Christian liturgical churches, June 6<sup>th</sup> is the Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5)*

### **General Themes**

- God keeps God's promises and God's grace is bestowed on all of Creation. Let us work to protect all people from violence.
- The prophets and teachers remain faithful and constant. Let us be faithful as peacemakers.
- Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus dispels evil. Let us be committed to end the tragedy of deaths by gun violence.

### **Revised Common Lectionary Readings (Proper 5)**

- 1 Samuel 8.4-11, (12-15), 16-20, (11.14-15) or Genesis 3.8-15
- Psalm 138 or 130
- 2 Corinthians 4.13-5.1
- Mark 3.20-35.

### **Links to sermons on gun violence:**

<https://rac.org/sermon-starters-gun-violence-prevention-rabbi-robert-nosanchuk>

<https://rac.org/sample-sermon-gun-violence-prevention-rabbi-lauren-grabelle-herrmann>

<https://interruptingthesilence.com/2018/02/19/the-wilderness-of-gun-violence-a-sermon-on-mark-19-15/>

<https://trinitycleveland.org/blog/2015/sermons/sermon-for-dec-6-2015-sermon-for-dec-13-2015-gun-violence-prevention-sabbath/>

<http://www.chriserdman.com/blog/2015/12/8/what-to-do-with-all-this-gun-violence-a-sermon>

See sample sermon by the Rev. Karen Joy Kelly at the end of this packet.



## **BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Bulletin announcements are included for the 3 weekends before June 4th-6th. They are formatted in orange and black as an example if you wish to use color. If you prefer to create your own insert(s), please feel free to do so. We ask you to share what you create with us.

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**For the May 14-16 bulletin:**

### **Preparing for Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath**

***Please remember to wear orange on June 4th-6th***

A prayer of preparation for the Sabbath:

God of all mercy, who weeps with us as we anguish over lives broken and lost to the violence which so pains our community: Open our ears that we might hear their cries; open our eyes that we might see their fears; open our hearts that we might embrace them in love; and open our arms that we might protect them from all harm. Amen.\*

*\*Courtesy of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri*

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**For the May 21-23 bulletin:**

### **Preparing for Gun Violence Reduction Sabbath**

***Please wear orange on June 4th-6th***

**Michigan Gun Deaths by Intent for 2019**

<https://efsgv.org/state/michigan>

**1,220**  
gun deaths in Michigan, including  
**83**  
children and teens  
(ages 0-19)

**61%**  
Suicides comprised three in  
five gun deaths.

**38%**  
Homicides comprised nearly  
two in five-gun deaths.

**87%**  
of gun death victims  
were male

Great Creator, on whose protection our health, safety and security depend: We implore your healing of a nation divided and unable to find common purpose in resolving the scourge of gun violence; lift souls and offer hope to all whose desperation would end in self-inflicted death; bring forbearance and love to our homes so that frustration and anger may be diffused through conversation not violence; oversee those places where we gather to learn and worship that they may be safe sanctuaries for all who enter them; be present where we work that mutual respect and just relationships might govern our economic lives and disagreements be resolved through engagement not revenge; join us where we walk and play that our streets and turf may cradle dreams not bodies; and strengthen, encourage and support all who strive to find shared cause in preventing gun violence; all for your love's sake, Amen.

<https://www.eachotherskeeper.org/chapter-3>

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**For the May 28-30 bulletin:**

**Preparing for Gun Violence  
Reduction Sabbath**

***Please wear orange on June 4th-6th***

The Supreme Court's rulings do not prevent effective gun regulations. Far from it. In the District of Columbia v. Heller ruling, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote: "Like most rights, the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited...nothing in our opinion should 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." And, since Heller, courts nationwide have found a wide variety of firearms laws constitutional because they can help prevent gun deaths, injuries, and crimes in communities across the country.

In *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the Court ruled, for the first time, that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual right to possess a handgun in the home for self-defense. \*

\*Public Law 112-55, 125 Stat. 609; Sari Horwitz & James Grimaldi, NRA-Led Gun Lobby Wields Powerful Influence Over ATF, U.S. Politics, *The Washington Post*, December 15, 2010, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/14/AR2010121406045.html>)

## SERMON ATTACHMENT

### **Sermon by The Rev. Karen Joy Kelly, June 2020**

#### **Year A Trinity Sunday**

#### **Gun Violence Prevention Sunday**

#### **Genesis 1.1-2, 4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13.11-13; Matthew 28.16-20**

For the Word of God in Scripture, For the Word of God among us, For the Word of God within us. Thanks be to God.

Today is Trinity Sunday. Today is Gun Violence Prevention Sunday. Today is also another Sunday in a string of pandemic Sundays where we find ourselves alone. Today is a Sunday in which our souls have been pierced by all that we have witnessed this past week ... inflaming our rage, making us feel numb, wordless, helpless.

Yet today is a day that that we can take a deep breath (or several) open our eyes to new reality and focus on what we can do and with what little we are in our little corner of the world to make it better. We are required to be and to do as our Lord intended. We are to love ... beyond all measure ... we are to love.

The church, as we know it today, was born on Pentecost, which we celebrated last Sunday. We need to pray and to discern what the church of tomorrow is to look like as we transition into this new world during the next few weeks. As we will be leaving our quarantine behind, how is it that we wish to re-engage with the rest of the world? How do we reconcile? How will we move forward both as congregation and individually?

Today's Gospel commissioned the apostles, disciples ... and us ... to begin again. As in Genesis, God commissioned Adam, in Matthew God commissions all of us. We are called to go forth into the world making disciples of all ... being and living out lives that show the way of love to all. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians we are called to put things in order.

I don't know how this feels to you today ... in our present circumstances ... as we see the good, the bad and the ugly ... taking place. How do we manage to be who we are to be as we feel helpless in this time and place. How do we prepare for re-entry into the world out there that has been changed forever for each and every one of us? How can we make use of the time that has been given to us, perhaps given to get our priorities straight when we face re-entry? Where does one begin?

Perhaps for today, let us consider the implications of what our church has designated as Gun Violence Prevention Sunday. This is but one of many issues that need addressing, and it is an important one.

Today we wear orange as a recognition of what we stand for. We wear orange in memory of Hadiya Pendleton who was shot and killed in Chicago at the age of 15, just one week after performing at President Obama's 2nd inaugural parade in 2013. Her friends chose the color of hunters. "Don't shoot me" it says.

I speak to you this morning as one who has led congregations through times of horrendous grief, sadness and shock at the needless deaths of those who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Those who died violently due to mass shootings. I not only had to deal with my own personal grief, but how to lead congregations through their own grieving process.

My first experience was as a chaplain of Westminster Canterbury, a large retirement community in Lynchburg VA. The event was the mass shooting at Virginia Tech that occurred on April 6, 2007. How was I to be pastor to a group of folks, many of whom were Virginia Tech alums, who in their final years, needed a way to respond to this crisis spiritually, mentally and physically as best they could. We prayed, we talked, and then at a special service, we mourned together. We prayed by name for each one who had died in that needless mass shooting and for the perpetrator. As the names were called, a member of the community came forth and accepted a rose in that person's name and committed to pray for he or she and for their family for the coming year.

Fast forward to December 14, 2012. The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Again, we distributed flowers, each with the name of a victim on it with parishioners at St. Peter's in Altavista, VA committing to a year of prayer for them and their families.

June 17, 2015, Charleston, SC, Mother Emanuel AME Church. We closed the doors of our St. John's that Sunday to both stand and worship with our sisters and brothers of color at Union Baptist Church, our neighbors around the corner in Glasgow, Virginia. (We nailed a sign on our front door to let visitors know where to find us.) We distributed flowers once again to the mixed gathering of people committing to pray for the families of victims and perpetrator.

Eventually there were so many more deaths that I ran out of money for flowers.

In the meantime the frequency and horror of mass shootings ... not only those major ones, but the smaller ones ... the ones in some of our neighborhoods ... gang shootings, unintentional hits ... domestic violence ... continues to grow.

And now, this week, by Tuesday, the guns came out.

Did you know that gun sales equal that of toilet paper purchased during this pandemic? Did you know that gun shops were considered “essential” businesses during this time? Are you aware that “ghost” guns are easily built and assembled through 3D printing and there is no way to trace them? Have you thought about the increase in domestic violence during a time of quarantine? Last weekend in Chicago alone there were 19 deaths and 63 injuries due to gun violence.

I believe that, because of the structure of our church and our call to be loving witnesses to the call of Jesus, we are in a position to be pro-active in this movement. And, our actions are always in community with other denominations and faith communities.

The Episcopal Church Policy for Action Office of Governmental Relations, at the direction of the governing body of The Episcopal Church, through the General Convention, has advocated for Gun Violence Prevention since 1995 beginning with support for the federal ban on assault weapons. (EC 2/95) Each General Convention since that time has passed resolutions for Gun Violence prevention.

“Bishops united against Gun Violence” was formed after Sandy Hook. Their mission statement reads as follows:

We are an ad hoc group of nearly 100 Episcopal bishops who have come together to explore means of reducing the appalling levels of gun violence in our society, and to advocate for policies and legislation that saves lives.

We believe in a God of life in the face of death who calls our church to speak and act decisively against the unholy trinity of poverty, racism and violence.

In the struggle against these evils, our group offers four contributions.

1. Supporting Public liturgy, including processions, vigils and prayer services to commemorate the dead and inspire the living.
2. Spiritual support for those living with gun shot wounds, with grief, with fear and with temptation and hopelessness, and advocacy for broader and easier access to mental health services for those at risk of suicide.

3. Sound teaching for those yearning of bring an ethic of Christian compassion and concern for the common good to bear on debates regarding unjust economic and legal structures, public safety, individual rights and our responsibilities to one another as children of God. And

4. Persistent advocacy for common sense gun safety measures that enjoy the support of owners and non-gun owners alike, such as:

- a. Handgun purchaser licensing
- b. Background checks on all gun purchasers
- c. Restrictions on gun ownership by domestic abusers
- d. Classification of gun trafficking as a federal crime
- e. Encouragement for the development of “smart gun” technology
- f. Federal funding for research into gun violence prevention strategies
- g. Safe storage of firearms.

“Episcopalians against gun violence” has emerged from this group.

Following the Sandy Hook mass shooting A Holy Week Way of the Cross was organized to go from St. John’s on Lafayette Square to Capitol Hill with a liturgy created especially for the occasion. The walk, and particularly the reflections of each station, reflected the commitment to transformational change then the proclamation of God’s hope to the world.

In Chicago, where gun violence has long been a concern, Episcopalians from across northern Illinois and their partners in 65 faith-based and civic organizations marched in CROSS walk, a four mile procession to remember Chicago’s murdered youth. They say that “CROSSwalk calls us to pray, to build relationship and to act as though our lives depend on us. And they do.”

Back in DC, the Washington National Cathedral partnered with Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence to present a series of events to mark a Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend; religious leaders, members of congress, gun control advocates, law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals gathered.

Episcopalians have lobbied legislators to support gun-control laws, visited gun venders, hosted gun buybacks, created artwork memorializing gun-violence victims, preached about gun violence and observed a Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath.

Across the country the church has joined with other faith groups in this work as well. Locally, we are part of the Keeping the Peace Committee of Interfaith Action, that is co-chaired by Vicki Shroeder of St. Augustine's and whose membership includes Rev. Diane and myself. The actions of this group prevented Berrien County (one of the very few in the nation, if not the only in the state,) from becoming a "Second Amendment Sanctuary" or "Gun Sanctuary" County. This description refers to states, counties, or localities in the United States that have adopted laws or resolutions to stop or impede the enforcement of certain gun control measures such as universal gun background checks, high capacity magazine bans, assault weapon bans, red flag laws, etc.

Rob Burgess of St. Augustine's, our litanist for this morning, is a member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship through which the national Episcopal Gun Violence Prevention group is organized.

As we consider this issue of violence so in opposition to the love emanating from the Holy Trinity to combat the "evil trinity of poverty, racism and violence" (as the Bishops so eloquently named them) there is only one way forward.

I don't need to tell you that the world we are facing on that day when we are able to re-enter life it will be in a very new and very different way. We know that gun sales were exempted from non-essential business. We know that gun sales have spiked, even for first-time gun owners. We know that assault rifles are purchased at an increasingly high level following any disaster related to gun violence and even the pandemic.

We are called to use the only weapon that we have ... love. We are called to act and to speak in the name of love.

How might you live out your baptismal promise when thinking about these things? Where is it that you may break into the conversation and/or be the voice of love at any given moment?

Responding, response and responsibility are woven into our baptismal vows. Please, take time this week, to pray about these things. What one small step might you make? Maybe just wearing an orange ribbon?

May we, on this Trinity Sunday, despite our pierced souls yet with passion in our hearts, receive the commission of Jesus Christ as called for in the Gospel of Matthew. May we honor the God of creation and love and hope in all that lies ahead of us in all we do and say and with our total being. May we be the continuation of the Good News that the world needs right now.

In the name of our creator, our redeemer, and our sanctifier. Amen.



## **POST-GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION SABBATH EVALUATION**

**Friends,**

This is an evolving ministry and your opinions and input are important to the team working on these resources. Please provide us with your thoughts and ideas for improvement. We want to know what you find to be useful. If you have additional resources to share, please send them with your evaluation. Thank you.

**Did you use the materials? If so, what? What was most helpful?**

**What would have been more helpful as a resource?**

**General comments:**

**Please return evaluation to:**

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