

The news continues to be saturated with stories of violence and unrest. The number of violent acts involving firearms continues to skyrocket, there have been over one hundred and forty two just school shootings since December 14, 2012 as of this writing.

The Mercy and Justice Team of the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to doing the difficult work of education and speaking out against all forms of violence and in this particular environment in our country and world, gun violence.

As far back as 1976, The United Methodist Church has been raising the banner of non-violence and peace. In a resolution to General Conference of that year the United States was described as a *shooting gallery*. That resolution, *Gun Control*, declares that the "*mounting proliferation of firearms in U.S. society*" means the safety of citizens "*cannot be guaranteed.*" The resolution calls on the church to affirm its faith through vigorous efforts to curb gun violence.

The Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2014 passed a resolution calling for the safety of our country, and in particular our children. As relating to gun violence it asks for common sense regulation and controls,

...lifting up the vision of "a more excellent way" by calling on appropriate bodies within the church to:

Recall and adhere to Resolution #3426 from the Book of Resolutions which states,

*"...reflecting that the traditional role of The United Methodist Church has been one of safety and sanctuary, every United Methodist Church is officially declared a weapon free zone."*

And calling for our Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church to:

*Join United Methodist Women and the General Board of Church & Society in supporting the efforts of Faiths United to Prevent Gun and share information from Faiths United with congregations for study and action. Faiths United supports legislation to accomplish the following:*

- *Every person who buys a gun should pass a criminal background check;*
- *High capacity weapons and ammunition magazines should not be available to civilians;*
- *Gun trafficking should be a federal crime*

These requests should be just the minimum in addressing the violent society we have developed. And so in keeping with the United Methodist Church as a denomination and the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, our committee calls for the church and society to stand against violence in all forms, including gun violence. Our representatives must pass common sense gun controls as well as addressing the issues that would cause one to lash out in violent ways against another. To continue to reduce and eliminate gun laws and controls is to participate in the epidemic that gun violence has become in our land and in our world.

Working in the Service and Love of The Prince of Peace,

Rev. Kent H. Little, Chair

Mercy and Justice Team

Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church