God Not Guns Sabbath

Worship Guide

A Project of the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence
The Brady Center To Prevent Gun Violence is a national Non-profit organization working to reduce the tragic toll of gun violence in America through education research, and legal advocacy. The God Not Guns project, a program of the Brady Center To Prevent Gun Violence, is an interfaith partnership consisting of faith-based groups that work to educate the public about gun violence by promoting community awarenes and grassroots mobilization. The programs of the Brady Center complement the legislative and advocacy work of its sister organization, The Brady Campaign To Prevent Gun Violence and its network of Million Mom March Chapters.

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Please visit our Web site, www.GodNotGuns.org for more information on how the Brady Center is working to reform the gun industry.
God Not Guns Sabbath
observed the last weekend of every September

The God Not Guns Sabbath is an annual event that asks us to reflect on and respond to the epidemic of gun violence that kills over 30,000 Americans every year.

Our challenge is to call people of faith to action, to awaken them to the spiritual issues at the core of gun violence and to give them the necessary tools to build vital gun violence prevention ministries in their congregations and communities.

Through worship, prayer, and art, the God Not Guns Sabbath asks people of faith to reflect on the spiritual and moral ramifications of gun violence, and calls on them to make real the Divine vision of a peaceable kingdom by creating non-violent and loving communities where all children have the opportunity to grow and prosper, and where everyone can live without fear of being cut down by gun violence.
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Our challenge is to call people of faith to action, to awaken them to the spiritual issues at the core of gun violence and to give them the necessary tools to build vital gun violence prevention ministries in their neighborhoods, congregations and faith communities.

**God Not Guns** seeks to raise awareness of gun violence as a spiritual and moral crisis.

We call on every congregation, synagogue, mosque and gathering of people of faith to work toward a peaceable society where all children have the opportunity to grow and prosper and where everyone can live without fear of being cut down by firearm violence.
This has been a traumatic year for our college campuses. The shooting at Virginia Tech University where 33 people lost their lives was a prelude to shootings at Northwestern Illinois University, the University of North Carolina, Auburn University.

One frequently stated solution to such shootings is to allow concealed weapons on college campuses. If students and faculty were armed, so this argument goes, then a renegade shooter could be stopped before doing much harm. But no matter how loudly or often it is repeated, the idea that guns save lives or that more guns mean less gun crime is simply false.

Sometimes I wonder if the proponents of guns on campus have ever been on a children’s playground. Just picture a group of children playing. If one child picks up a stick and begins hitting the others, what would you do? Most parents would take the offending child aside, take the stick, and if the child can play without harming others, let the child return to the group. One thing we certainly wouldn’t do is give all the other children sticks (bigger, better sticks perhaps?) with which to defend themselves. If we wouldn’t arm our children with sticks when they are small, why would we arm them with guns when they are older?

That we would unquestioningly accept the idea that guns offer ultimate safety and security is indicative of a much larger, and I would say, spiritual problem. It is a problem affecting much of our culture today. It is a problem that I call “Gundamentalism.”

Gundamentalism is a religious movement without spiritual grounding. It is rooted in the sale and promotion of violence. Gundamentalism willfully ignores the loss of nearly 30,000 lives each year to gun suicide and gun homicide. The mantra, “Guns don’t kill people, people kill people,” is a magnificent half-truth that attempts to absolve gundamentalism of responsibility for the uniquely American epidemic of gun violence. This mantra is chanted over and over until it drowns out the Biblical mandates of thou shall not kill; love your neighbor as yourself; forgive seventy times seven; do good to those who hate you.

There are more than 200 million guns in the hands of private owners in America. Gundamentalism cannot survive without the complicity of believers who are deaf to the groaning of tens of thousands who have lost brothers, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters to gun violence. We are a nation at war with ourselves. Accepting gun violence as an inevitable part of American life has devastating consequences for our human spirit.
Violence feeds on fear. Rather than offering a vision of community in which we are bound together by our common humanity, gundamentalism encourages fear, teaching us to see each other as The Other, a potential enemy, a threat endangering our family, our home, our person. Such fear blinds us to the image of God embodied in every human being. Even more, it blinds us to our own connection to the Divine. Fear of the outside world reflects a fearful inner world. The human spirit longs for peace. By encouraging us to live in fear, gundamentalism denies the deep peace of the Spirit which resides in each of us.

Gundamentalism creates a culture of fear then offers a seductive promise: with a gun one can live without fear. It offers power, freedom, self-determination, security and protection all in the metal casing of a gun. With the gun as its icon, the Second Amendment as its creed, gundamentalism proclaims that nothing is as sacred as the right to own a gun.

It is time for people of faith to refute gundamentalism’s dangerous doctrine. Protecting the rights of gun owners is its professed highest good, but in reality its policies and politics benefit an industry that manufactures millions of guns each year. With the passage of laws like concealed carry gun violence is becoming institutionalized in American society. The gun is not a symbol of freedom; it is an icon of fear. When we arm ourselves against each other we also arm ourselves against God.

The danger of gundamentalism is its soul-forgetfulness. By giving into the powerful allure of guns, we become disconnected from our spiritual center. Gundamentalism thrives in a society that has forgotten that each of us belongs to God. To acknowledge our own sacred belonging means that we also acknowledge it in others. Sacred belonging frees us from fear while reminding us that the spiritual journey requires us to feel powerless. When our soul belongs to God, we live not by our own authority but by Gods. We seek not to have control over our lives but to give our lives over to God. If our spirits are devoted to God, then we live in reverent awareness of the sacredness of every life, and in doing so we come to know the transformative power of compassionate living, the challenge of seeking justice, and the deep peace of walking humbly with our God.

Reverend Rachel Smith
Founder God Not Guns Initiative
Did you know?

- Each year over 30,000 Americans are killed by guns.

- More than half of all gun deaths are suicides.

- Firearms are the second leading cause of death (after motor vehicle accidents for young people ages 19 and under in the U.S.).

- 8 American children and teens age 19 and under are killed by guns every day.

- Gun violence costs the U.S. at least $1 billion annually.

- In the last 40 years, more than one million Americans have died as a result of gun violence.

Much of our society seems addicted to gun violence as a way to solve conflict. We believe this is not the way of faith. The unrelenting loss of human life due to gun violence demands a faithful response.

Our efforts focus on three areas:

1. Educating individuals and congregations about the human cost of gun violence.

2. Providing the tools congregations need to make preventing gun violence a ministry of their faith community.

3. Providing information about state and federal gun policy.
“What prophet is an idol
When its maker has shaped it,
A metal image, a teacher of lies?
For the workman trusts in his own creation
When he makes dumb idols!
Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake!
To a dumb stone, Arise!
Can this give revelation?
Behold it is overlaid with gold and silver,
And there is no breath at all in it”

The school year of 2006 began rather quietly as most school years do. But on August 30th, a boy with a gun walked into a high school in Hillsborough, NC and the new school year was marked by violence.

Little did we know that this August 30th shooting at a North Carolina high school would be a harbinger of a national spate of school shootings? The young shooter in Hillsborough had a deadly plan and a number of guns; after killing his father he shot and wounded a student at a nearby high school. In September, five members of the Duquesne University basketball team were shot on campus after attending a dance at the student center. Then a sixteen-year-old girl in a Wisconsin high school and a principal in Colorado were victims of gun homicide. And just as our nation was busy forgetting these shootings, came the horror in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania when a gunman entered an Amish school and killed five young schoolgirls and wounded several others. Then on April 16, 2007 just weeks before graduation, a gunman killed 32 students and faculty at Virginia Tech University. For a country still haunted by the specter of Columbine, these shootings are particularly painful.

We are a nation at war with ourselves. There are nearly 200 million gun in homes across America. More than 28,000 people lose their lives to gun violence every year in this country. Of these gun deaths, more than half are suicides. Every day we lose 32 people to gun violence. As with all wars, children are the most innocent victims. A recent report before the Child Fatality Task Force showed that in 2004, 51 of North Carolina’s children were murdered. Of these, 39 were killed by guns. In 2005, the number of children murdered rose to 78, with guns accounting for 61 of those deaths.
Nationally the statistics of the child gun deaths are equally grim. Every day in America we lose 8 children to gun violence. Since the shootings at Columbine High School more than 18,000 children have died and for every child killed by a gun, four others are injured. Gunshot wounds are the third leading cause of deaths for American children 4-15 years of age.

What has been Congress’ response to this unrelenting loss of life? In the last six years Congress has failed to pass any meaningful gun control measures. Under the guise of protecting the rights of gun owners, our federal representatives allowed the assault weapons ban to expire; passed legislation that would make it impossible for the ATF to revoke the licenses of gun dealers who act illegally; and attempted to make federal information about the sources of crime guns secret. Though its product can be lethal, Congress has allowed the firearm industry to be largely unregulated. Even a teddy bear has to meet consumer product safety standards. Handguns do not.

What poverty of spirit causes American to so glorify their guns – in movies, on television, in video games, on the streets of our neighborhoods and in the halls of Congress? Where are the prophets who will condemn the religion of the second amendment, which preaches a sacred right to own any and all kinds of firearms? Why are people of faith and conscience not protecting the sacred trust of children’s lives as vehemently as Congress protects the gun lobby? It is time for pastors, priests, rabbis and imams to speak out against the blasphemy of gun violence. We must expose the magnificent half-truth of “Guns don’t kill people. People kill people.” Guns do kill people. Guns kill our children with devastating regularity in this country. One only has to look at the events of any week in America to see the full truth of gun violence.

Our God is a God who said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” When Charlton Heston held up a rifle at the NRA convention in Denver Colorado just weeks after the shootings at Columbine High School and shouted, ‘…from my cold, dead hands…’ he was making an idol of the gun. And when our Congressional representatives ignore human suffering to do the bidding of the gun lobby in exchange for campaign dollars, they are making an idol of the gun.

Idolatry of the gun seduces with false power and teases with illusive security. The idolatry of the gun make the American obsession with possession of guns seem like freedom when all it really offers is a life lived in fear. How can we see the face of God in every person or claim them as our brothers and sisters when we are so afraid that we think we must carry a concealed weapon everywhere we go? How can we stretch our arms wide towards God’s goodness when one hand is grasping a gun? How can we depend only on God when next to our hearts we’re wearing a weapon?

The greatest commandment says we are to love God. The second greatest commandment says we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Do we truly love and trusts God or do we love and trust our guns? As people of faith we must stand witness to the destructive power of gun violence. We must say we will rely not on guns, but on God. We will affirm not guns, but life. We will bless not guns, but our common humanity. We must hold up a higher value saying that our children’s lives are a sacred trust and that human life is more important than any gun.
SAMPLE ORDER OF SERVICE 1

Theme:

Putting your faith into action to prevent, reduce and eliminate gun violence in our communities.

Welcome:

Welcome to our annual God Not Guns Sabbath

We hope that you will learn from our service today and be inspired to continue the work of preventing gun violence and preventing horrible tragedies the likes of which we have experienced during the Columbine tragedy, the Amish school heartbreak, and the Virginia Tech disaster. We hope that you will be inspired to prevent the kind of senseless and preventable violence so many communities across the country face every day.

Please accept the gift of this information and open your hearts and minds to the possibility of creating and living in a peaceful society that is free from the carnage of gun violence.

Praise and Worship

Involves a praise team, choir or inspirational speaker to read selected scripture, lead songs or offer motivational words.

Sample Hymnal/Spiritual Songs:

-- Where Can I Go for Peace


-- When Faith Endures


**Scriptural Reading** (see suggested scriptural readings on page 9 for more examples)

Sample Scripture/Readings

**MICAH 6:8**

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

**THICH NHAT HANH**

All violence is injustice. Responding to violence with violence is injustice, not only to the other person but also to oneself. Responding to violence with violence resolves nothing; it only escalates violence, anger and hatred. It is only with compassion that we can embrace and disintegrate violence. This is true in relationships between individuals as well as in relationships between nations.

**Message**

Plan for the delivery of a thematic message on the prevention, reduction, and elimination of gun violence. Choose a selection from *Food for Thought or Prayers* as a basis for your message on gun violence prevention.

**Prayer of Commitment** (see suggested prayers starting on page 14)

Offer congregation members inspirational words that will encourage an on-going commitment to work to end gun violence in their communities and across the country.

*Augment your support for continued commitment by making the Gun Not Guns Resolution and Statement of Commitment provided in the worship guide available to your church community as an additional educational resource.

**Closing Hymn/Spiritual Song:**

Sample Hymnal/Spiritual Songs

**Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing**

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: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war any more.

People: And none shall be afraid for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Leader: We gather today in remembrance of all those killed by gun violence.

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

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.
INVOCAION

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

(Choose one)

- Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- Praise to the Lord the Almighty
- God Will Take Care of You
- O God, Our Help in Ages Past
- Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
- There’s A Wideness In God’s Mercy
- Lord of Our Growing Years

SCRIPTURE READING

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved from my enemies. The cord of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice and my cry to him reached his ears.

Psalm 18:1-6

GOSPEL READING

But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. Give to everyone who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:27-31
**CONTEMPORARY READING**

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**

Spirit of the Living God

**TIME OF REFLECTION AND REMEMBRANCE**

During this time a list of names of victims can be read, or a pray of confession offered.

**LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Leader:** 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.

**People:** 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:** 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.

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

Lord listen to your children praying.
Lord send your spirit to this place.
Lord listen to your children praying
Send us love, send us power, send us grace.

SERMON OR MEDITATION

OFFERING

HYMN

CLOSING PRAYER

O Holy God, make of us a receiving people.
Let us walk with your feet.
Let us touch with your hands.
Let your voice speak in and through us.
Let your wisdom be transformed into right action within us.
Let us carry forth your spirit into the world.
Let us be at one with You, O God.
And may each who feels as one with You, know also that we are one with every other, until all creation is unified in the light of love.

May you go in peace and in the light of God’s love.

(Adapted from a prayer by Bebe Williams, July 10, 1994)
SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS
(All passages are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)

**GENESIS 1:26-27; 31**

Then God said, “let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in God’s own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And God blessed them... And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good...

**EXODUS 20:1-5(A)**

Then God spoke all these words: I am the lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, you shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God ...

**DEUT. 6:5**

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might.

**PSALM 3:1-4**

O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of me, there is no help for him in God. But you, O Lord are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cry aloud to the Lord and God answers me from His holy hill.

**PSALM 8**

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beast of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
PSALM 18:1-6

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice and my cry to him reached his ears.

PSALM 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh – my adversaries and my foes – they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident. One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in the Lord's temple. From his temple he heard my voice and my cry to him reached his ears. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation! If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations. I am exalted in the earth.” The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

PSALM 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time and forevermore.
ISAIAH 2:1-5

The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it and many peoples shall come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk I his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

ISAIAH 59:1-6

See the Lord’s hand is not too short to save, nor the Lord’s ear too dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness… Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they rush to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, desolation and destruction are in their highways. The way of peace they do not know, and there is not justice in their paths. Their roads they have made crooked; no one who walks in them knows peace.

MICAH 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

HABAKKUK 1:1-4

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not listen? Or cry to you ‘Violence’ and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous – therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

HABAKKUK 2:1-4

I will stand at my watchpost and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.
MATTHEW 5:9-12

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

MATTHEW 26:51-52

And behold one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”

LUKE 6:28

But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

LUKE 12:32-34

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

JOHN 10:10

I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.

ROMANS 12:14-21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”

GALATIANS 5:13-15

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.
GALATIANS 5:22-3; 25-26

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.

GALATIANS 6:7-10

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are the household of faith.

JAMES 3:13-18

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.
SUGGESTED PRAYERS/LITURGY

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Leader: O guiding Shepherd and Refuge from the raging storm, we seek the comfort and consolation of your warm embrace and sheltering care from the violence that swarms around and within us. Everywhere we turn we’re told in no uncertain terms that vengeance and war are the cure for the wrongs waged against us. We are a culture prone and addicted to violence and in need of a disciplined recourse of withdrawal from this dangerous drug.

People: Lord, help us and rescue us.

Leader: Rescue us from ourselves; our self-absorbed anxieties that overwhelm us with destructive behavior and suicidal tendencies. Release us from a fear and hatred of others that garner our need for guns as a means of protections and insulation from them. Breathe in us your Spirit that radiates life and hope; that enables us to interact positively with others and live as emissaries of your peace.

People: Enable us to take delight in you, O Lord, for you are the desire of our hearts.

Leader: Nurture our children in your ways; feed them abundantly by your wisdom and truth. Reorient their coordination from violent video games; suppress their greed for gangster rap; harness their hunger to humiliate and degrade others because of their gender, race or sexual orientation; and free their minds, mouths and bodies of derogatory terms and foul gestures, for these also are destructive weapons.
People: Lord, help us and rescue us.

Leader: Grant us, O God, the will to turn all weapons of individual or mass destruction into tools of global sustainability and medical advancement. Inspire in us the courage to rid our streets of gang warfare and stray bullets; to rid our homes of domestic violence and accidental shootings; to rid our neighborhoods of police brutality and our highways of racial profiling; to rid our bodies and environment of toxic abuse and our world of international conflict. Grant every soul a faith in you that affirms your likeness in all humanity and creation, and that never again uses religion as a sword severing anyone from an ultimate sense of worth and dignity. Enable us again, O God, to worship you with an ever burning faith that melts the metal of all vengeance, weaponry and war. Make us instruments of your justice, compassion and peace that your realm may come, and your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

People: Enable us to take delight in you, O Lord, for you are the desire of our hearts.

Leader: Baruchim Ha'baim b'Shem Adonai (Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord). Amen

Contributed by Rev. Arnold I. Thomas
Leader: Do not fear because of the wicked; do not be envious of the wrongdoers

People: For they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb.

Leader: Trust in the Lord, and do what is good, so that you will live in the land and enjoy security.

People: Take delight in the Lord, and God will give you the desires of your heart.

Leader: Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for God;

People: Do not fear over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.

Leader: Refrain from anger and forsake wrath.

People: Do not fear: it leads only to evil.

Leader: The wicked plot against the righteous, gnash their teeth at them;

People: But, the Lord laughs at the wicked and sees that their day is coming.

Leader: The wicked draw their sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to kill those who walk uprightly;

People: Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Leader: Better is a little that the righteous person has

People: Than the abundance of many wicked.

Leader: The wicked borrow and do not pay back

People: But the righteous are generous and keep giving.

Leader: Our steps are made firm by the Lord when God delights in our way.

People: Though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand.

Leader: Depart from evil, and do what is good; so you may abide forever.

People: The Lord loves justice and will not forsake the faithful.
Leader: The wicked watch for the righteous, and seek to kill them.

People: The Lord will not abandon them to their power, or let them be condemned when they are brought to trial.

Leader: The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord.

People: God is their refuge in the time of trouble.

Leader: The Lord helps them and rescues them.

People: God rescues them from the wicked, and saves them because they take refuge in the Lord.

PRAYER 1
(St. Ethelburg's Center for Reconciliation and Peace, 2005)

God of life,

Every act of violence in our world, in our communities, between myself and others, destroys a part of your creation.

Stir in my heart a renewed sense of reverence for all life.

Give me the vision to recognize your spirit in every human being, however they behave towards me.

Make possible the impossible by cultivating in me the fertile seed of healing love. May I play my part in breaking the cycle of violence by realizing that peace begins with me.
PRAYER 2
(Contributed by Rev. Rachel R. Smith)

O God of all people,

We know that you are as near as our next breath
wherever we go, you are already there.
Thank you for creating us in your image,
and claiming us as your children.

O Lord, we confess that we have forgotten who we are;
that each of us belongs to you.
We confess that we have forsaken your peaceable kingdom,
and allowed gun violence to shatter our communities.

Forgive us O God.
Remind us that your love is more powerful than any gun
and that your spirit will sustain us as nothing else can.
Let us desire, as you desire, forgiveness rather than revenge,
reconciliation rather than retribution.

Give us the courage to live not by the gun but by your spirit.
Open our hearts to you so that we also may open them to each other.
Guide us on the path of peace.
In the name of all who love you, we pray. Amen

PRAYER 4
(Adapted from National Council of Churches of Christ, "An Ecumenical Celebration of the Word")

Gracious God,

We confess that in our lives we do always choose the way of peace. We spread gossip, which fans the flames of hatred. We are ready to make any sacrifice when the world demands, but few when God invites. We worship the false God of security. We are tempted to trust in locks, security systems, and guns for our protection. We hold out one hand in friendship, but keep a weapon in the other behind our back. We have divided our communities into those we trust and those we do not. Huge problems challenge us in the world and in our own communities, but our greed, fear and selfishness prevent us from united to solve them. Lord, we need your help and forgiveness, your healing and reconciling power. Help us all to lay down our weapons and trust in you.

Amen
PRAYER 5
(Adapted from Episcopal Peace Fellowship, “Gift of Shalom,”)

Gracious God,

Inspire us with the hope in 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. My we and other receive your shalom, that we might be faithful instruments of your love. Blessed be your name forever.

Amen.

PRAYER 6
(Adapted from Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, worship on Martin Luther King Day, 2007)

God of justice, whenever we settle for the way things are instead of the way love would have them to be, forgive us. Whenever we are paralyzed by fear or limited in vision, increase our trust in you. Whenever we offer charity, but fail to work for justice, show us the more excellent way that love requires. Whenever we tire of the struggle and tomorrow feels overwhelming, restore our hope. Whenever we forget those who have gone before us or act as if we are the only ones who are trying, allow us to recognize our arrogance. May the witness of our brother Martin encourage us to be dreamers for all the world’s sake.

Amen.
I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

First keep peace within yourself, then you can also bring peace to others.

*Thomas a Kempis*

We challenge the culture of violence when we ourselves act in the certainty that violence is no longer acceptable, that it’s tired and outdated no matter how many cling to it in the stubborn belief that it still works and is still valid.

*Gerard Vanderhaar*

...And so I say to you today that I still stand for nonviolence. And I am still convinced that it is the most potent weapon available to the Negro in his struggle for justice in this country. And the other thing that I am concerned about is a better world. I’m concerned about justice. I’m concerned about brotherhood. I’m concerned about truth. And when one is concerned about these, he can never advocate violence. For through violence you may murder a murderer, but you can’t murder murder. Through violence you may murder a liar, but you can’t establish truth. Through violence you may murder a hater, but you can’t murder hate. Darkness cannot put out violence. Only light can do that.

And so I say to you, I have also decided to stick to love. For I know that love is ultimately the only answer to mankind’s problems. And I am going to talk about it everywhere I go. I know it isn’t popular to talk about it in some circles today. I’m not talking about emotional bosh when I talk about love. I’m talking about a strong, demanding love. And I have seen too much hate. I’ve seen too much hate on the faces of sheriffs in the South. I’ve seen hate on the faces of too many Klansmen and too many White Citizens Councilors in the South to want hate myself, because every time I see it, I know that it does something to their faces and their personalities and I say to myself that hate is too great a burden to bear. I have decided to love. If you are seeking the highest good, I think you can find it through love. And the beautiful thing is that we are moving against wrong when we do it, because John was right, God is love. He who hates does not know God, but he who has love has the key that unlocks the door to the meaning of ultimate reality.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*
Each person has inside a basic decency and goodness. If he listens to it and acts on it, he is giving a great deal of what it is the world needs most. It is not complicated but it takes courage. It takes courage for a person to listen to his own goodness and act on it.

_Pablo Casals_

If you wish to be brothers, let the arms fall from your hands. One cannot love while holding offensive arms.

_Pope Pius VI_

Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

_Martin Luther King, Jr._

I am convinced that love is the most durable power in the world. It is not an expression if impractical idealism but of practical realism. Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, love is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and religion enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil and this can only be done through love.

_Martin Luther King, Jr._

All violence is injustice. Responding to violence with violence is injustice, not only to the other person but also to oneself. Responding to violence with violence resolves nothing; it only escalates violence, anger and hatred. It is only with compassion that we can embrace and disintegrate violence. This is true in relationships between individuals as well as in relationships between nations.

_Thich Nhat Hanh_
Each time a man or woman stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, they send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those tine ripples can build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Robert Kennedy

An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.

M. Gandhi

My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.

Desmond Tutu

Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The spirit of non-violence necessarily leads to humility. Non-violence means reliance on God, the rock of ages. If we would seek His aid, we must approach Him with a humble and contrite heart.

Gandhi

I will not carry a gun...I’ll carry your books, I’ll carry a torch, I’ll carry a tune, I’ll carry on, carry over, carry forward, Cary Grant, and carry cash, carry me back to Old Virginia, I’ll even hari kari if you show me how, but I will not carry a gun!”

Hawkeye M.A.S.H ‘Officer of the Day’

The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Mother Theresa

Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures. And however undramatic the pursuit of peace, the pursuit must go on.

John F. Kennedy
Fear and love are contradictory. Love is reckless in giving away, oblivious as to what it gets in return. Love wrestles with the world as with self and ultimately gains mastery over all other feelings. My daily experience...is that every problem lends itself to solution if we are determined to make the law of truth and non-violence the law of life.

For truth and non-violence are, to me, faces of the same coin. The law of love will work just as gravitation will work, whether we accept it or not... The more I work at this law, the more I feel the delight in life, the delight in the scheme of this universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of nature that I have no power to describe.

Gandhi

One of the most persistent ambiguities that we face is that everybody talks about peace as a goal. However it does not take sharpest-eyed sophistication to discern that while everybody; a talk about peace, peace has become practically nobody's business among the power-wielders. Many men cry Peace! Peace! But they refuse to do the things that make for peace.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is not right, my fellow countrymen, you who know very well all the crimes committed in our name, It's not at all right that you do not breathe a word about them to anyone, not even to your own soul, for fear of having to stand in judgment of yourself. I am willing to believe that at the beginning you did not realize what was happening; later you doubted whether such things could be true, but now you know, and still you hold your tongues.

John Paul Satre.

Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty.

Gandhi
The essence of nonviolence is love. Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics and techniques for a nonviolent struggle arise naturally. Nonviolence is not a dogma; it is a process.

Ticht Nhat Hanh

In those who harbor such thoughts as “He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me,” hatred never ceases. In those who do not harbor such thoughts, hatred will cease. Hatred never ceases through hatred in this world; through nonviolence it comes to an end.

Buddha

True nonviolence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness.

Gandhi

Every act of love is a work of peace, no matter how small.

Mother Theresa

The day will come when, after harnessing the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.

Teilhard de Chardin

The badge of the violent is his weapon, spear, sword, or rifle. God is the shield of the nonviolent.

Gandhi

While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.

St. Francis of Assisi

You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments that stand out, the moments when you have really lived, are the moments when you have done things in a spirit of love.

Henry Drummond

I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent.

Gandhi
The way of peace is the way of love. Love is the greatest power on earth. It conquers all things.

Peace Pilgrim

Let a man overcome anger by loving kindness; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome miserliness with generosity; let him overcome lies with truth.

Buddha

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time, there would be no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed …

Thomas Merton

When embraced, the rod of violence breeds danger and fear.

Buddha

All tremble at the rod, All are fearful of death. Drawing the parallel to Yourself, Neither kill nor get others to kill.

Dhammapda 129-134
The team rushed Michael out of the PICU and down the hall to surgery to find out what made his heart stop.

It turned out that Michael had bled out in his chest. His chest cavity filled with blood from the wound site where the bullet had shredded his lung and his lung had been removed. This caused his heart to stop beating. This caused a lack of oxygen to his brain. This resulted in the doctors announcing that Michael was legally brain dead.

In Arizona, when a person is declared brain dead, a death certificate is written.

Although machines still pumped air into Michael’s lungs, the spirit, the being, the person, the essence of Michael, was no longer there. Michael was pronounced dead at 3:13 P.M. on August 21, 2004.

Our family spoke to a team of people from the Donor Network of Arizona and we agreed to donate his organs, eyes, tissue, and bone before removing Michael from life support.

And we did.

My story does not end here. The after-effects of losing a child to gun violence, so suddenly, so violently, are infinite. There is no closure. There is no recovering. Normal, as you once knew it, no longer exists. There is no getting over it, no getting past it, and no letting it go. The gunshot wound from Michael’s chest reached far beyond just killing him. The ripple effect of gun violence is astounding.

The man who killed my son took a plea-agreement and received the presumptive sentence in Arizona…two and a half years.

I always wonder if Arizona had a few sensible gun law, if perhaps Michael’s outcome would have been different. The gun that was used to shoot Michael did not have a safety lock on it. It did not have any sort of child-proofing. It was sitting on a shelf, out in the open, fully loaded. Among my son and others in the house, there was also a two-year old. Any one of them could have been shot. In the end, it was my only son.
Each day I will myself, somehow, to get out of bed. Each day I will myself to keep on with the mundane things that I did before Michael was killed. Normal will never exist for me again. I try to find a new sense of normal and pray to God that the pain, the horror, the guilt, the nightmares, the hatred, the anger, and the grief, will become softer because I don't know how much more I can take.

I have found myself trying to get to the root of gun violence here in Arizona. It will be an arduous journey. In the meantime, I have started the Greater Phoenix Million Mom March (events where I talk to kids and their parents about gun safety issues and gun violence prevention.

I pray that no one ever has to experience the death of a child or any loved one to gun violence. It's such a preventable cause of death, so that is what I now strive toward.

By Mari Bailey (Michael's Mom) www.michael-hampson.memory-of.com
President, Greater Phoenix Million Mom March www.mmmphoenix.org

3/27/07
FAITH IN ACTION

Twenty Things your congregation can do to prevent gun violence:

1. Make ‘Hands Without Guns’ banners to display in your sanctuary or in other parts of your house of worship.*
2. Distribute ‘Hands Without Guns’ coloring books to families with young children.*
3. Host a vigil or a reading of the names of gun violence victims in your chapel or sanctuary.*
4. Study the Biblical basis for non-violence.
5. Study the problem of gun violence in your community, city, and state.
6. Study the problem of gun violence on the national level.*
7. Incorporate prayers of confession and prayers for victims into your worship.
8. Hold a 12-hour prayer vigil for ending gun violence.
9. Create a plan for home safety without the use of firearms.
10. Consider the impact of toys, games, TV and movies designed for children and youth. Organize a violent toy turn–in.
11. Ask children and youth to write or draw reflections on the importance of non-violence.
12. Host a weekend of arts dedicated to the prevention of gun violence.
13. Practice forgiveness toward self and others.
14. Create a plan of peace for members to use at home, school, and work.
15. Include examples of peacemaking in worship.
16. Advocate for local and national policies that would reduce gun violence.*
17. Host a ‘Faith Leaders’ breakfast to invite other congregations to join you in the God Not Guns ministry.
18. Write a note of encouragement and appreciation to a friend or family that has been affected by gun violence. You don’t have to send it; just express your feelings.
19. Hold a bell ringing to honor lives lost to gun violence.*
20. Pray for courage and guidance.

* see www.GodNotGuns.org for more information
AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES, USA

The Bible repeatedly links the realities of spiritual corruption and physical violence. In such terms, the scandalous level of firearms violence in the United States screams to heaven for healing. The groans of victims’ demands an evangelical response from the Christian community – a response rooted in the confidence of the prophetic vision that city streets will one day be restored to safety.

Outside the requirements of legitimate law enforcement agencies and regulated recreational purposes, it is time the church declare that the manufacture, sale and ownership of guns raise serious moral questions. The easy availability of battlefield assault rifles, along with the circulation of ( ) million privately-owned handguns, are evidence of spiritual corruption and a source of barbarous violence…

Therefore, we call on American Baptists – as individuals, congregations, regional and national agencies – to call for repentance. Specifically, we urge that congregations, together with other people of faith and good will, develop strategies for addressing gun violence in local communities…

AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

The fabric of our society is threatened by the appallingly high rate of violent death and injury caused by firearms. The climate of fear that has been generated – in cities, in suburbs and increasingly in rural areas- undermines our efforts to deal with pressing social problems. It turns Americans on themselves by creating an “us or them” mentality. This has gravely inhibited effective joint action in support of human goals.

The gun defenders argue that it is people, not guns, that kill people. The same may be said of dynamite. Yet its possession and use are prohibited except to the extent that it is used in a manner helpful to society. In the case of handguns, only possession and use by law enforcement officials serve any useful purpose.
Friends Committee on National Legislation

The overwhelming presence of guns in our national consciousness cannot be separated from the communal despair we feel as we witness our self-destruction. It is time to address this helplessness with legislation to reverse the unrestricted proliferation of guns on our streets. Legislation alone will not eliminate violence, but Congress should, at the very least, take steps to make killing less convenient.

FCNL envisions a nation where power is not equated with the brandishing of a gun, where strength derives from peaceful cooperation and shared prosperity rather than violence. We cannot reach our full potential as a nation if we continue to wage war with ourselves.

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

The history of the United States has been one in which violence has played an important role at every social level for both victim and perpetrator. This violence has variously been glorified and romanticized by some segments of the population, while observed with revulsion by others. The victims of violence struggle to end their victimization, but the purveyors of violence tend to rationalize its continued existence. As people of faith we have a profound belief in the value of human life. We want to see an end to the senseless suffering that the unrestricted availability of handguns, assault weapons, and look-alike toy guns makes possible, creating a climate in which an enormous number of accidental deaths of adults and children has become an appalling reality. It is not only that handguns and assault weapons are the weapons of choice in the commission of crimes, but they also become the instruments by which ordinary people act out their aggressions in conflicts or disputes with friends, family, and others simply because these weapons are so available.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

In the United States today, deaths and assaults by guns of all kinds have reached devastating proportions. Each year there are more than 30,000 women, men, young people, and children for whom guns are instruments of death, whether by suicide, homicide, or accident. Approximately 250,000 persons suffer injuries from misuse of guns, resulting in a lifetime financial toll of $14.4 billion. Gun violence is a matter of deepening concern to the religious community as well as the entire society... While not the sole cause of the nation’s crisis of violence, the ready availability of guns for purchase, their accessibility to children, and their convenience to those contemplating criminal activity or suicide makes gun violence a major social problem...

Gun violence is of deep, valid concern to the community of faith whose members are called to a vision of the “peaceable kingdom” – a society where God’s justice reigns, where reconciliation replaces anger, where an open hand and a turned cheek replace retaliation, where love of enemies is as important as love of neighbor. The religious community must also take seriously the risk of idolatry that could result from an unwarranted fascination with guns that overlooks or ignores the social consequences of their misuse.
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is among those religious communions that have called for social policies and personal lifestyles to contain gun violence...

Once again, the church dare not be silent. Because our society is experiencing increasing gun violence, the church regards effective gun control and regulation to be a matter of spiritual concern as well as public responsibility.

**Union of American Hebrew Congregations**

Too many Americans, especially children, die as a result of gun violence every day. The American people have been aroused by this ongoing, senseless slaughter. Statistics strongly affirm that gun control laws prevent gun violence. Canada’s experience with decreasing gun violence after the enactment of strict gun control laws has demonstrated, clearly and unequivocally, that gun control works.

In prior resolutions, the Union has taken a strong stand in favor of gun control. However, merely enacting resolutions has been ineffective in advancing the cause of gun control in the United States. The power of the NRA (National Rifle Association) in controlling the debate on gun control by raising money and mobilizing a determined minority has yet to be met with an equal fervor on the part of those favoring effective gun control. Our reticence allows the NRA to score victory after victory. The time has come for us to do the same. We must counter the NRA with our own resources, our own organization and our own passion.

Our task as Reform Jews is to challenge America’s conscience and to heed the biblical injunction that we must not stand idly by the blood of our neighbor. We must embark on a moral offensive and send the message to our elected officials that we care deeply about this issue and will hold them accountable.

**United Methodist Church**

Gun violence around the world is a growing menace. In the United States today, deaths and assaults by guns of all kinds have reached devastating proportions. Each year, there are more than 30,000 women, men, young people and children for whom guns are instruments of death, whether by suicide, homicide, or accident. Approximately 250,000 persons suffer injuries from misuse of guns, resulting in a financial toll of over 14.4 billion dollars for the durations of the survivor’s lives. Gun violence is a matter of deepening concern to the religious community as well as the entire society...

As people of faith, we recognize the inherent goodness in all creation. This is a point of departure toward our understanding of God as the giver and sustainer of all life. We also recognize that the ultimate purpose of creation is to reveal God’s reign of justice and peace.

The biblical admonition of choosing life instead of death sets the tone for all human activity. “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore, choose life that you and your descendents may live.” (Dt. 30:11, 19-
20) Through these words, we are called to order our communities in such a way that all human relationships reflect God’s justice and the promise of Shalom. As God has established just laws that call forth redemptive power and creation, so we as a part of that creation are called to be life givers, to transform chaos into order...

The church as an instrument of reconciliation needs to bring an end to the senseless violence, suffering and human loss caused by the unrestricted availability of handguns and assault weapons used by ordinary people to act out their aggression and conflicts or disputes with friends, families, and others. Gun violence is a deep concern to the community of faith whose members are called to a vision of the peaceable kingdom, a society where God’s justice reigns, where reconciliation replaces alienation, where an open hand and a turned cheek replace retaliation, where love of enemies is as important as love of neighbor. The religious community must also take seriously the risk of idolatry which could result from an unwarranted fascination with guns, and which overlooks or ignores the social consequences of their misuse.

Once again, the church dare not be silent. Because our society is experiencing increasing gun violence, The United Methodist Church regards effective gun control and regulation to be a matter of spiritual concern and public responsibility.

**United States Catholic Conference Committee on Social Development and World Peace**

The growing reality and extent of violent crime is of great concern to the Committee on Social Development and World Peace, and to all Americans. It threatens more and more of our citizens and communities. The cost of this violence in terms of human life and suffering is enormous. We speak out of pastoral concern as persons called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus, who came “that they may have life and have it to the full,” (John 10:10) We are deeply committed to upholding the value of human life and opposing those forces which threaten it.

One of these factors is the easy availability of handguns in our society. Because it is so easily concealed, the handgun is often the weapon of crime. Because it is so readily available, it is often the weapon of passion and suicide.

This is clearly a national problem. No state or locality is immune from the rising tide of violence. Individual state and local action can only provide a partial solution. We must have a coherent national firearms policy responsive to the overall public interest and respectful of the rights and privileges of all Americans. The unlimited freedom to possess and use handguns must give way to the rights of all people to safety and protection against those who misuse these weapons.
HERE’S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

JOIN THE GOD NOT GUNS (GNG) COALITION

☐ Complete and Return your God not Guns Action Form
☐ Contact the leadership in your congregation and talk about developing a gun violence prevention outreach ministry.
☐ Contribute to our coalition. ☐ $25 ☐ $50 ☐ $100
☐ Share the GNG information – send our website www.GodNotGuns.org to your pastor, rabbi, or priest.
☐ Ask your congregation to become a member of the GNG coalition.
☐ Adopt a resolution To Prevent Gun Violence (see sample page 43).
☐ Visit and comment on our God Not Guns Blog at www.GodNotGuns.org

WANT MORE INFORMATION? JUST ASK!

I want information about:

☐ Hands Without Guns coloring books and banners
☐ Vigils
☐ God Not Guns Sabbath
☐ State legislation
☐ Federal legislation
☐ Hispanic/Latino Outreach Initiative
☐ African American Outreach Initiative

Send to or contact:

Brady Center To Prevent Gun Violence
1225 Eye Street NW
Suite 1100
Washington DC 20005
PHONE: (202) 289-7319 FAX: (202) 371-9615

Or e-mail: GodsnotGuns@bradymail.org
Have your church, synagogue, temple or organization adopt this resolution. Make copies and encourage other institutions and groups to do the same. Please let us know that you and or your faith community have made this commitment by sending us a copy of your resolution.

Send to:

God Not Guns Coalition
Brady Center To Prevent Gun Violence
1225 Eye Street NW
Suite 1100
Washington DC 20005
(202) 289-7319

Or e-mail: Abort@bradymail.org
Resolution of the Faithful
To Prevent Gun Violence

Whereas,

• Over 30,000 people are killed each year in the United States
• More than half of all gun deaths are suicides
• Firearms are the second leading cause of death (after motor vehicle accidents) for young people ages 19 and under in the U.S.
• We lose eight children a day to gun related deaths
• For every child and teenager killed by a gun, more than four are non-fatally injured
• In the last 40 years, more than 1 million people have died of gun violence in the U.S.
• Gun violence costs the U.S. at least $1 billion annually

Whereas, much of society seems to be addicted to gun violence as a way to solve conflict,

Whereas, the unrelenting toll of gun violence in America erodes the economic, physical, and spiritual well-being of all our citizens,

Whereas, gun violence is an affront to the Divine vision of a peaceable kingdom,

Now therefore, be it resolved that ________________________________ joins the God Not Guns Coalition. We resolve to lend our name and support to the Coalition’s efforts to make our community and country safe from gun violence.

Name of organization

# of members

Address

Phone

Fax

email

Name & Title of Authorized Representative
The mission of the God not Guns Initiative calls on people of faith to take action, to awaken to the spiritual issues at the core of gun violence and to commit to engaging the necessary tools that will build vital gun violence prevention ministries in congregations and communities.

We call on every congregation, parish, assembly, synagogue, mosque, temple and gathering of people of faith to work toward a peaceable society where all children and families have the opportunity to grow and prosper and where everyone can live without fear of being cut down by firearm violence.

☑ YES! I/we want to put my faith into action against gun violence!

(please check all that apply)

☐ Yes, I/we will host a God Not Guns Sabbath on the last weekend of September 2008.

☐ Yes, the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence may list my/our organization’s name on your website/literature as a God Not Guns Coalition member.

☐ Yes, I/we will pass this information on to my/our community and extended network of faith-based partners.

☐ Other Activity/effort (please explain)

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Name of organization

____________________________________________________________________________________

Contact Person

Title

____________________________________________________________________________________

Email Address

____________________________________________________________________________________

Address

____________________________________________________________________________________

City

State

Zip

Signature

Date

Please fax completed forms to Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence 202-371-9615

For more information about how you can make a difference please visit us at www.GodNotGuns.org.

Questions? Call Alicia Horton at the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence 202-289-7319.