

GUN VIOLENCE: A CALL TO PRAYER AND ACTION

Albany Presbytery Peacemaking Task Force

November 15, 2017

Dear Fellow Presbyters:

The mass shooting at the Rancho Tehama Elementary School in Northern California was the 317th mass shooting in the United States in 2017. So far, this year mass shootings have killed more than 13,000 people and injured more than 29,900. The Congressional Research Office defines a mass shooting as one in which "a shooter kills 4 or more persons indiscriminately."

Sisters and brothers, we commend to you this PCUSA statement following the massacre in Las Vegas, which says, in part:

Our outrage cannot be contained. Our sadness cannot be lifted. This has gone on for far too long. We mourn with those who have lost family members, friends and colleagues. We pray for healing for the injured both physically and mentally. We pray for our nation where there are more guns than people. Each week we learn of a new victim to gun violence and not even our children are immune to gun-inflicted wounds.

In our 2010 policy paper, "Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call" we read that "*Presbyterians are called to be agents of change in the world, to be reconcilers because we ourselves have been reconciled. Therefore, we are calling upon the church, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to help build an effective spiritual and social awakening that says "No" to the prevalence of gun violence in this country.*" (p. 4)

So, what can we do? *First*, we must pray to God for peace within the human heart.

Secondly, we must actively work for the passage of gun safety legislation. The American people are overwhelming in favor of background checks. After the 2014 massacre of Sandy Hook the White House assembled a task force that came up with several proposals. It called for a reinstatement of the assault weapons ban and restoring a 10-round limit on ammunition magazines. It also proposed universal background checks and for gun trafficking to become a federal crime. These are proposals which would not only limit the number of dangerous weapons available, but would only make our nation a safer place for our children.

Thirdly, we need to support candidates who have gun safety legislation as a part of their platform. Now is the time for men and women who are willing to demonstrate the courage of faith to stand with unpopular platforms which are necessary for our mutual well-being.

Presbyterians, now is the time for our voices to be united. We must speak with clarity and truth. This is not a matter of politics, rather one of faith and morality. Please write, call, text, tweet and Facebook message your members of Congress urging that they promote and support gun safety legislation. Congressmen Christopher S. Murphy and Richard Blumenthal (Connecticut), as well as Rep. Earl Blumenauer (Oregon) and Sen. Edward J. Markey (Massachusetts) are challenging their fellow members of Congress to act and act quickly. Let us join them as well as organizations around this country demand an end to gun violence.

And remember the words of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*" (John 14:27)