

Emergency Response Kit For Gun Violence Events



*Presbyterian
Peace
Fellowship*

Prepared by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
Gun Violence Prevention Ministry
www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence

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Find More Resources at
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
<https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/gun-violence-packet/>

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the gun violence emergency that you face, please know that the community of the larger church is with you, as a sign of God's presence in a terrible time. Please reach out and seek support. You are not in this crisis alone. We give thanks that you and your church are there to help support, hold and heal your community. Lord, have mercy.

This Kit Contains:

- 1. Prayers by Presbyterian Students for responding to gun violence**
- 2. Scripture Reflections**
- 3. Hymn Suggestions**
- 4. Dealing with Conflict on this Issue**
- 5. Sample Vigil for a Time of Gun Violence**
- 6. Creative Worship Ideas**
- 7. Action Suggestions**
- 8. A Responsive Version of the Prayer Commended to Presbyterian Congregations by the 223rd General Assembly (PCUSA)**

Prayers from Students

These prayers were written by students in the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown, NY Middle and High School Youth Groups. There are two Prayers of Confession, a Psalm of Lament and a Litany of Remembrance and Advocacy. We thank the adult leaders who worked with these students: Timothy Wotring, Jen Burns, Stephen Thompson, Christian Pisco and Rev. Margery Rossi. We also thank Rev. Tami Seidel and Stephanie Hare, for permission to distribute these prayers throughout the denomination.

Prayer of Confession #1

Gracious God,
You are generous in forgiveness
You are with us, lovingly guiding us
You encourage us to be our best

We confess that we have not done our best in protecting our children.
Lockdowns in school put students in a negative, stressed, and pressured environment;
they distract them from their education and goals.
Gun laws could improve a lot,
yet lawmakers seem more concerned with money than people's lives.
Mental Health, too, is not being addressed in schools;
students are suffering in silence.

Yet, you, O God, call us to do right and create a world at peace.

To do so:

We should create a culture where peers can talk to each other without fear of being judged.
Group discussions should be the norm, and not the exception.
Teachers should also be trained in facilitating such conversations.

Schools should have more accessible therapists;
ones who make the first move in talking with students;
ones who are authentic and genuine.
We should educate others on how guns should not be used for clout
and the danger of these weapons.

May we strive to live without fear and strife.
God, grant us a good and fresh start. Amen.

- Joshua, Grade 6; Lionel, Grade 9; Marina, Grade 9; Tiffany, Grade 11

Prayer of Confession #2

Almighty God,
We confess that we can't solve the problem of gun violence, that we started,
and we aren't ready for anything that is to come.
All of our "solutions" are just avoiding the *real* problem.
We ask for forgiveness, for instead of finding solutions for gun violence,
we practice non-effective lockdown drills.
This is not good enough and it keeps happening.
We hope that we can find permanent solutions to stop gun violence,
such as having a better understanding of mental illnesses;
figuring out where the guns are going,
who has them and what they plan to do with them.
We hope we can convince people to stop using guns for violence. Amen.

-Anthony, Grade 9; Brynne, Grade 7; Jonathan, Grade 9; Kithara, Grade 6

Psalm of Lament

Dear God,
Students everywhere are suffering
Bullets are raining down on them and nothing is changing.
We have faith that through your work in the world, things will get better.
We have faith that you will end the cycle of gun violence.
Please help our leaders to create sensible gun laws
and bring safety into our hallways and classrooms.
We praise you in our everyday lives and give thanks for your never ending love.

-Ben, Grade 9; Emma, Grade 9; Ethan, Grade 10; Julia, Grade 7

Litany of Remembrance and Advocacy

Let us remember our fellow students
who have fallen to people with malcontent in their hearts and guns in their hands.

We will stand up against gun violence.

Let us remember the teachers, school administrators and others
who have died trying to keep kids safe.

We will stand up against gun violence.

Let us remember the innocent people who die every day from needless gun violence.

We will stand up against gun violence.

Let our students go to school without fear of violence or lockdown drills
that don't solve anything.

We will stand up against gun violence.

Let us take a stand and get guns out of the hands of people who could abuse them.

We will stand up against gun violence.

Let us take action against racism,

a primary cause of unreasonable police shootings of young people of color.

We will stand up against gun violence.

Let us take *real* action and stand behind our “thoughts and prayers” instead of speaking empty words. Let this be a call to all people in the community to work

for a new era of gun laws.

We will stand up against gun violence.

-Faith, Grade 9; Luke, Grade 11; Natalie, Grade 12; Sam, Grade 7

Scripture Passages for Addressing Gun Violence

OLD TESTAMENT

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

NEW TESTAMENT

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

- **Revelation 11:15** - Kingdoms of world become kingdoms of Christ
- **Revelation 19:6** - God's certain victory over evil

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

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

HYMNS Relating to Gun Violence

Hymns by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette www.carolynshymns.com All Rights Reserved. Permission Given for Worship/Action Use:

I Cried to God Tune: Finlandia

https://www.carolynshymns.com/i_cried_to_god.html

If We Just Talk of Thoughts and Prayers* Tune: O Waly, Waly (See Below)

https://www.carolynshymns.com/if_we_just_talk_of_thoughts_and_prayers.html

God of Mercy, You have Shown Us Tune: Beach Spring

https://www.carolynshymns.com/god_of_mercy_you_have_shown_us.html

God, We Have Heard It Tune: Ah, Holy Jesus

https://www.carolynshymns.com/god_we_have_heard_it.html

From the blue *Presbyterian Hymnal*:

3 Comfort, Comfort You My People

332 Live into Hope

333 Seek Ye First

337 Isaiah the Prophet has Written of Old

385 O God, We Bear the Imprint of Your Face

386 O for a World

401 When Will People Cease Their Fighting

407 When a Poor One

408 Where Cross the Crowded Way of Life

420 God of Grace and God of Glory

From *Glory to God Hymnal*:

100 My Soul Cries Out/Canticle of the Turning

753 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Other: Let There be Peace on Earth

434 Today We All Are Called to be Disciples of the Lord

450 O Day of Peace

543 Abide with Me

527 Near to the Heart of God

530 O Lord of Life, Where'er They Be

If We Just Talk of Thoughts and Prayers

Tune: O WALY WALY 8.8.8.8

Hymn text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

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If we just talk of thoughts and prayers
And don't live out a faith that dares,
And don't take on the ways of death,
Our thoughts and prayers are fleeting breath.

If we just dream of what could be
And do not build community,
And do not seek to change our ways,
Our dreams of change are false displays.

If we just sing of doing good
And don't walk through our neighborhood
To learn its hope, to ease its pain,
Our talk of good is simply vain.

God, may our prayers and dreams and songs
Lead to a faith that takes on wrongs —
That works for peace and justice, too.
Then will our prayers bring joy to you.

Dealing with Conflict in the Church over this Issue

Excellent Resource from the PC(USA):

Seeking to be Faithful: Guidelines for Presbyterians in Times of Disagreement

Download at

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/seeking-be-faithful-guidelines-presbyterians-tim-es/>

A Sample Vigil to Support those who Grieve

This vigil worship service was created by Rev. Margery Rossi and has been used to remember and grieve after many incidents of gun violence. Some of these worship resources come from the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence www.bradycampaign.org



Prayer Vigil To Stand with Victims of Gun Violence

_____ Presbyterian Church

We grieve with you, _____ (i.e. Buffalo, Uvalde, Dayton).

May God be with you in your grief,
that you may know consolation.

May God be with you in your anger,
that you may receive peace.

May God be with you in your confusion,
that you may be led to truth.

And may God be with you in your fear,
that you may delivered into surpassing love.

We Grieve...

Call To Worship

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

**People: That we may beat our swords into plowshares,
and our spears into pruning hooks.**

Leader: We gather today in remembrance of all those killed or harmed by gun violence in
_____ just this week.

**People: We mourn the loss of over 44,000 of our brothers and sisters,
killed by guns in our country this year.**

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

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

We gather to claim our belonging to each other

and our commitment to living the way of God's peace.

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

**People: That we may beat our swords into plowshares,
and our spears into pruning hooks.**

Leader: Neighbor shall not lift up gun against neighbor.
Neither shall they learn violence any more.

**All: And none shall be afraid,
for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.**

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
Inspire us with the gift of shalom,
the gift of wholeness and the promise of your presence.
Give us wisdom to seek nonviolence
as an answer to the violence of our lives and world.
Give us courage to seek wholeness in a fractured and divided world,
to find reconciliation rather than revenge,
to abandon the instruments of violence and death
and entrust our lives, our homes and our families to you.
May your presence fill us and others with the thirst for unity,
wholeness, and the desire to see all people valued
as created in your image.
May we and others receive your Shalom
that we might be faithful instruments of your love. Amen.
(Adapted from Episcopal Peace Fellowship, "Gift of Shalom")

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

Scripture Reading

Psalms 46

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

There's a river whose streams gladden the city of God,
the holy dwelling of the Most High.
God is in its midst, it will never fall –
God will help it at daybreak.
Though nations are in turmoil and empires crumble,
God's voice resounds, and it melts the earth.

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

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

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

Hymn: Amazing Grace

We Remember...

Time of Reflection and Remembrance

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

Litany of Remembrance

Leader 1: Let us remember all who have been harmed by violence.
We acknowledge the strength of those who survived
and of those still struggling to heal.

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

*Leader 2: Let us remember the families and loved ones
of those who have died from gun violence.*

We acknowledge their pain and their deep grief.

*They too, are part of our community,
and need our love and help towards healing.*

Leader 3: Let us remember the perpetrators,
and the families of those who commit violence.
We acknowledge that their lives, too, are devastated
and their hopes dashed.

For their sake and for ours, we remember
that pain goes in many directions from each act of violence.

All: We will stand up to violence.

**We stand together expressing our unity,
our connection to each other and to the divine;
our hope for healing and for transformation.**

Let the Spirit of our Creator move through us.

Help us to transform and heal our communities.

And let us begin by transforming ourselves. Amen.

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

We Hope...

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:1-12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,

for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We Pray...

Closing Prayer

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

Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.

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

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

Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering

to each other. With humility, with awareness of the existence of life,

and of the sufferings that are going on around us,
let us practice the establishment of peace in our hearts
and on earth.

-- *Thich N'hat Hanh*

Hymn: The Canticle of the Turning

We Act...

Write a message on a prayer flag,*
soon to be sent to the people of _____ .

Sign letters to our legislators.

Join us as we mobilize in response to God's call.



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

***If we just talk of thoughts and prayers
And don't live out a faith that dares,
And don't take on the ways of death,
Our thoughts and prayers are fleeting breath.
--Carolyn Winfrey Gillette**

Creative Worship Ideas

1. Hearts of Prayer



This activity reminds us that the shooting in Parkland, FL occurred on Valentine's Day, 2018. Include a foam or cardboard or construction paper heart with each bulletin. Provide a basket with markers in it at the end of each pew. At the front of the sanctuary, on the communion table set up an unadorned wreath and containers with pearl-headed sewing pins.

Invite worshippers to write a name or names on the heart for a student or other person whose safety and well-being they want to lift before God. Offer the following prayer, and the opportunity to come forward and pin hearts to the wreath. You could do this before or after the Offering, or as the Prayers of the People.

Loving God, you care for all of us. You calm our hearts and quell our fears. We lift up to you the young people in our care, in our Sunday Schools, our home, our local schools and our lives. We lift up to you the children we know, and those we don't and never will know. We lift up to you the students who fear for their safety and long to know they can learn in communities of peace and security. We place them in your loving hands, naming aloud and in our hearts those for whom we especially care:

(At this time, you may bring forward to your heart, saying the name/s aloud, or simply attaching them with the decorative pins to the wreath in silence. Once all have had the opportunity to come forward, continue with these words:)

We thank you for your abiding love and trust in your grace and peace, now and forever, Amen.



After worship, hang the wreath in a place that recognizes the importance of children and youth – on the CE Director's office door, the entrance to the nursery or Youth Group Room, etc.

2. Prayer Flags – an action to share with children in the community

Materials needed: rope, fabric squares about 5 x 7 in different colors, markers or pens and some way to clip, sew or glue the flags to the rope. Participants can write or draw a message or prayer for the well-being and safety of students or others. Display the prayer flag.

After an incident of gun violence in America, make prayer flags and send them to the Presbyterian Church or Presbytery office nearest the attack, inviting them to hang the flags outside their building as a sign of our mutual grief and support. See this idea in the Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit on p. 46 at

<https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit/>

Action Suggestions

1. Find Local Actions Near You: www.everytown.org/act and www.marchforourlives.com and momsdemandaction.org Everytown for Gun Safety is the national organization that sponsors Students Demand Action and Moms Demand Action, with chapters in all 50 states. Find yours.

2. Memorial to the Lost – This idea involves a public display of personal items that symbolize gun victims, such as pairs of shoes for each victim. You can do this for a single incident or for all victims in your city/state over a period of time. Collect donated shoes for the display. Contact your local media and officials.

3. T-Shirt Display Witness – Photo, *right*, shows the T-Shirt Display Witness at the Druid Hills Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA after the Feb. 14, 2018 shooting in Parkland, FL. Enlist several groups in your church --- youth, adults, men, women, choir, others --- to work together to assemble crosses or other displays, as well as t-shirts. You might want to create a hand-out for those who view the display to explain it and to share the vision of your congregation for preventing gun violence in America.



4. Guns to Gardens – Many congregations are joining the new Guns to Gardens movement to provide a local service for community residents to responsibly dispose of unwanted guns without returning them to the gun market. These congregations participate in Guns to Gardens Action Circles offered regularly online by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. See www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence for registration and a brochure on how Guns to Gardens transforms metal designed to kill into metal designed to cultivate gardens. This is a very healing experience for communities that are recovering from a mass shooting. It is a public service and witness to the love of God in your community.



5. Background Checks – Gun Safety advocates, including those who own guns and those who do not, agree by large margins that comprehensive background checks on all gun sales can help save lives. Every year some version of this concern is introduced in Congress and in many state governments. Learn all that you can about advocacy for background checks for all gun sales, including gun shows and on-line at www.everytown.org

Reach out to your Congressional Representatives on this. Do not accept the excuse that a time of gun tragedy is not a time for action. *It is exactly the time for change.* Learn when your representatives will be in their home states here: www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/Calendars+and+Schedules

Do a special Offering of Letters Service to support comprehensive background checks or incorporate letters/postcards into your worship service. See the Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit for a worship service that includes letters to your elected officials as an act of faithfulness.

www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit

6. E-News -- Learn what other churches are doing in the monthly Peace Fellowship Gun Violence Prevention E-news. To subscribe, download the free Congregational Toolkit at www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit or contact janoh4@aol.com

7. Need encouragement or advice on this journey? Contact Deanna Hollas of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Gun Violence Prevention Ministry at 214-702-2265.

1. Why Comprehensive Background Checks?

As described in an Editorial in *The Washington Post* Jan. 8, 2019:

“Under federal law, certain categories of people are not allowed to buy or possess firearms. Background checks, introduced in 1994, have blocked licensed dealers from making more than 3.5 million gun sales to such people. There is, however, no system to prevent these same prohibited purchasers — felons, domestic abusers, fugitives and others deemed dangerous to themselves or others — from buying at a gun show, over the Internet or through a newspaper ad. No background checks. No questions.

The situation makes absolutely no sense, as more than 90 percent of Americans agree. Democrats and Republicans, gun owners and non-owners favor universal background checks.”

According to Robin Lloyd, Director of Governmental Affairs for Giffords PAC:

“Closing this background check loophole is critical to making sure criminals and other dangerous people cannot easily access firearms.... Background checks are proven to save lives: States that require a background check on every handgun sale experience 38% fewer gun homicides of women by intimate partners, 53% fewer law enforcement officers shot and killed, and 53% fewer firearm suicides.”

2. What do we need? We need action that requires gun shows, private sales and on-line gun sales comply with the background checks required already for licensed gun dealers and gun stores, with only a few reasonable exceptions, such as the temporary transfer of weapons while hunting or at a shooting range, in situations of emergency, and the transfer of firearms within families. No single step can do more to prevent gun violence than vetting every single gun buyer to identify those who do not pass a background check.

We need this action at the federal level to end the practice of persons who cannot pass a background check in their state from crossing state lines to purchase a firearm in another state with fewer or no state requirements.

3. A Kairos Moment for Change On what else do over 90% of Americans agree? Nonetheless, passing comprehensive background checks will be difficult and will require American citizens to take sustained action in face of unprecedented opposition that has already begun by the NRA. As former Rep. Gabby Giffords put it before the US Congress, **“Stopping gun violence takes courage, the courage to do what’s right, the courage of new ideas. Now is the time to come together, be responsible — Democrats, Republicans, everyone. We must never stop fighting. Fight, fight, fight. Be bold, be courageous. The nation’s counting on you.”**

State Level Action - Gun Sense candidates are winning elections to many state legislatures and governorships, bringing their support for change and making the search for common ground more likely to succeed at the state level. While there is no substitute for federal action, each state can create gun policy to protect their residents. See this example of potential action in Virginia.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/sensing-an-opening-virginia-governor-rives-push-for-gun-control/2019/01/04/b1636280-103f-11e9-8938-5898adc28fa2_story.html?utm_term=.7d0e527ded28

Learn more about gun laws and legislation in your state at States United to Prevent Gun Violence www.supgv.org or at Everytown for Gun Safety www.everytown.org

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship GVP Congregational Toolkit also provides a local group contact working in every state. www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/

A Presbyterian Prayer for Action

**From the 223rd General Assembly, PC(USA), June 2018,
Marking 50 Years of Presbyterian Witness to Prevent Gun Violence**

Responsive Prayer Adapted by Cheryl and Doug Hunt, Stockton, CA
Option: Provide each worshipper with a small Post-It note and pen or pencil

Gracious God,
whose mercy never ends,
whose Spirit brings
the Kairos moment for change:
We confess our past willingness to abide the deaths
of over one million, six hundred thousand souls
lost to gun violence in the last 50 years:
the children,
the parents,
the distraught,
as well as millions more injured,
ruined,
orphaned,
widowed.
Help us to comprehend this carnage
and not become numb.

We give thanks for the long witness of the General Assembly
and all Presbyterians who are already engaged in preventing gun violence.
We thank you for raising up the students to lead us with marches, walk-outs and a passion born of pain.

We call upon you, Lord;
we have nowhere else to turn.
Galvanize all of us,
every congregation in the Presbyterian Church.
Wake us up in our pews and our lives;
do not let Christ find us asleep on this watch.

Rather, Lord, grant to our church members, both those of us who own guns and those of us who do not, a unity of purpose to change the national debate on gun violence.
Show us the path.

At all the places where you are proclaimed,
give us courage to stand against principalities and powers.
Grant us the joy
of using the gifts that you provide –
energy,
intelligence,
imagination
and love—
to help our communities and our nation heal from this tragedy and sorrow.

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

*****Option: At this point in the prayer, let us stop and think for a moment and remember a person you know (or a group of people) who has been a victim of gun violence. Write that name on your Post-It note.

Option: Later during the worship, invite worshippers to bring or pass their Post-It note forward to place the notes on a central table or cross or a sign to be displayed.

