

Responding to Gun Violence

Conversation 3: the public sphere

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Let us pray:

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn and no strength is employed but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit that this people may be gathered under the wings of the Prince of Peace; to whom be dominion and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

- adapted from the Prayer For Peace, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 815

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Luke 18:1-7

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my opponent.’ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?”

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What does this parable say to you about the work of gun violence reduction, prevention, and eradication?

Share your thoughts in the chat, or journal them briefly.

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Let us pray:

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and the creation of peace in our time, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

- adapted from the Collect for Social Justice, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 260

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Can you carry a gun into church in Ohio?

Yes

No

It depends

What difference does the new concealed carry law make?

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Political engagement and the IRS*

Issue Advocacy vs. Political Campaign Intervention

Section 501(c)(3) organizations may take positions on public policy issues, including issues that divide candidates in an election for public office. However, section 501(c)(3) organizations must avoid any issue advocacy that functions as political campaign intervention. Even if a statement does not expressly tell an audience to vote for or against a specific candidate, an organization delivering the statement is at risk of violating the political campaign intervention prohibition if there is any message favoring or opposing a candidate. A statement can identify a candidate not only by stating the candidate's name but also by other means such as showing a picture of the candidate, referring to political party affiliations, or other distinctive features of a candidate's platform or biography. All the facts and circumstances need to be considered to determine if the advocacy is political campaign intervention.

A communication is particularly at risk of political campaign intervention when it makes reference to candidates or voting in a specific upcoming election. Nevertheless, the communication must still be considered in context before arriving at any conclusions.

<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/rr-07-41.pdf>

*This is not legal advice!

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Political engagement and the IRS*

Whether an organization's attempts to influence legislation, i.e., *lobbying*, constitute a substantial part of its overall activities is determined on the basis of all the pertinent facts and circumstances in each case. The IRS considers a variety of factors, including the time devoted (by both compensated and volunteer workers) and the expenditures devoted by the organization to the activity, when determining whether the lobbying activity is substantial.

Under the substantial part test, an organization that conducts excessive lobbying in any taxable year may lose its tax-exempt status, resulting in all of its income being subject to tax. In addition, section 501(c)(3) organizations that lose their tax-exempt status due to excessive lobbying, **other than churches**** and private foundations, are subject to an excise tax equal to five percent of their lobbying expenditures for the year in which they cease to qualify for exemption.

...Churches are not subject to excise taxes on excessive lobbying.

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/measuring-lobbying-substantial-part-test>

*This is not legal advice! **Emphasis added

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The Episcopal Public Policy Network

In a [recent piece](#) in *the Atlantic*, Ed Jong quotes the late Paul Farmer, a [legend in public health](#), and a fierce advocate for addressing global inequalities. The quotation comes from Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, where Dr. Farmer says:

"I have fought the long defeat and brought other people on to fight the long defeat, and I'm not going to stop because we keep losing."

As Christians, we believe that Christ already is victorious. And so, even if the odds are long, even if we face defeat after defeat and do not see a way ahead, even if we feel that we are fighting the long defeat, we remain steadfast, our eyes fixed on the cross. As advocates, this means we continue to carry out our work and strive for justice. We do not do so because we will win every time, because we won't. We do not do so because we are assured of progress, because we are not. We recognize that on a human scale, we may face defeat. We keep striving for justice because that is what we are called to do.

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Prayer, education, action

What does the Episcopal Church say about gun violence?

General Convention Resolutions 2018

2012 *D003 Resolved*, That the 77th General Convention requests every parish and every diocesan place of work to declare their establishments as Gun Free Zones.

B005 Gun Violence as a Public Health Issue
Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 79th General Convention recognize gun violence in the United States as a public health crisis that requires federal government study to mitigate; and be it further *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention calls upon the Congress of the United States to repeal the Dickey Amendment and oppose similar efforts that seek to limit the scope of federally funded agencies to do research and share statistics related to gun violence, sales and distribution of untraceable guns, and unlicensed gun sales, and be it further *Resolved*, That the Office of Government Relations, members of the Episcopal Public Policy Network and individual Episcopalians be encouraged to advocate for funding and other policy measures that would encourage the Centers for Disease Control and any other appropriate federal government entities to study thoroughly gun violence in the United States and its impact on public health.

B007 Ethical Investing in Gun Manufacturers
Resolved, That the 79th General Convention direct the Executive Council Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility to develop and implement a shareholder engagement plan by which dioceses, church organizations, and individual Episcopalians investing in the publicly traded stock of gun manufacturers and retailers could act to effect change in these companies through the practices of shareholder advocacy to do everything in their power to minimize lethal and criminal uses of their products, and be it further *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention commend to the church the Mosbacher-Bennett Principles for Investors in the Gun Industry developed by Do Not Stand Idly By.

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Prayer, education, action

Resolutions in front of next week's General Convention include:

B003 Regulating Ghost Guns and 3D Printed Guns

Resolved ... That the parts and kits used to build ghost guns—unserialized and untraceable firearms that can be built by anyone using unfinished frames or receivers—should be banned, and until that is possible, should be subject to full regulation as firearms and subject to all federal regulations that apply to firearms, including all oversight related to the provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act; ... [includes a call for advocacy by the Office of Govt Relations, Episcopal Public Policy Network, and “individual Episcopalians”]

What does the Episcopal Church say about gun violence?

B006 Investing in State-Level Gun Violence Prevention Advocacy

Resolved, ... That the 80th General Convention urge dioceses of The Episcopal Church across the United States to advocate for safe gun legislation with their state governments; [includes a request for support for such initiatives from the Office of Govt Relations and a budget request of \$160,000 for implementation.]

B007 Investment in Community Violence Intervention to Prevent Gun Violence

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 80th General Convention commend investment in evidence-based community violence intervention programs and strategies that address gun violence as a public health issue; improve physical environments; strengthen anti-violence social norms; engage and support youth; reduce substance abuse; mitigate financial stress; reduce the harmful effects of the justice process; and confront the proliferation of guns; [includes a call for engagement with Congress]

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Some Bills under consideration in Ohio

- HB62 Designate Ohio a Second Amendment Sanctuary State
- HB297 Enact Firearms Industry Nondiscrimination Act
- SB185/HB325 Regards emergency powers when suppressing a riot; firearms rights
- HB617 Require firearms dealer to provide specified brochure to buyers

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Some Bills under consideration in Ohio

- SB73/HB259 Regards firearms transfers; require background check
- SB74 Raise the minimum age to purchase a firearm
- SB77 Regards certain items that increase firearms' rate of fire
- HB262 Enact Child Access Prevention Tax Credit Act
- HB257 Enact Extreme Risk Protection Order Act
- HB630 Repeal S.B. 215 of the 134th GA re: conceal carry

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Can you carry a gun into church in Ohio?

Yes

No

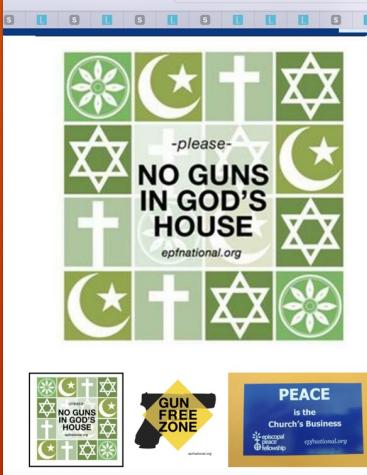
It depends

What difference does the new concealed carry law make?

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In your community

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In your community

Host a Peace Fair

What would that look like in your community?

Who is most in need of peace?



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In your community

Host a town-hall conversation about gun violence and its causes. What are people afraid of?

Ask how you can support your local School Board and educators in the wake of HB99



17

What else would you like to do?

18

Let us pray:

Merciful God, take from us the heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh.
Give us authority to trample scorpions and pick up snakes, but let us prefer your love to our power.
Teach us to forge plowshares instead of pistols, pruning hooks instead of long guns; save us from living and dying by the sword.
Give us such perfect love for our neighbor as casts out prejudice, fear, or contempt.
Suffer the little children to come to you; lift them up and bless them, as you love them.
Forgive those whom we struggle to forgive or to forget. Forgive us our trespasses.
Create in us a new heart, and renew us by your Spirit, we pray in the Name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

- adapted from the Biblical Litany for Churches Pursuing Peace in *Whom Shall I Fear? Urgent Questions for Christians in an Age of Violence*, Rosalind C Hughes