Worship Resources

Gun Violence Prevention
A Litany on the Tragedy of Gun Violence
Written for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2010 by Rev. W. Mark Koenig of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program

One: We celebrate and give thanks for the life and witness of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Many: Who proclaimed a vision of all people living together, and bore witness to the power of non-violence,

One: We gather, to remember his words, his commitment, his life and to rededicate ourselves to addressing the evil of gun violence

Many: which claimed his life and which continues to plague our country and the world.

One: Some 30,000 Americans die by guns each year in the United States.

Many: And we grieve.

One: An average of eighty people is killed by guns every day, including eight children.

Many: And our hearts break.

One: Guns kill some 1,000 people each day in the developing world.

Many: And we mourn.

One: An American child is twelve times more likely to die by a gun than are the children who live in all twenty-five industrialized nations combined.

Many: And we weep.

One: The annual economic cost of gun violence in America is estimated to at least $100 billion. Medical costs, decimated families, the court system, our jails and prisons, and security measures in airports, schools, and public buildings all contribute to this sum.

Many: And sorrow sweeps over us.

One: Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gun fire within our own country than American servicemen and women who were killed in all our wars of the 20th century.

Many: And we pray.

One: Faced with gun violence,

Many: We grieve for those are killed and those whose lives are forever changed;
We seek to comfort for those who have lost loved ones;
We pray for a change of heart for those who resort to violence.

One: Faced with gun violence, may we

Many: Educate; Organize; Advocate;
And in all the ways we can, work for that day when
Guns and weapons of destruction
Are transformed into instruments of healing.

One: May it be so.

Many: May we so do.
God of Mercy, You Have Shown Us

A Hymn Lamenting Gun Violence

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God of mercy, you have shown us ways of living that are good:
"Work for justice, treasure kindness, humbly die.
May your church be quick to offer loving lead!"

May we work for just decisions that bring journey with the Lord.
Yet your people here are griev ing, hurt by weapons that destroy.
Help us turn to you, believing in your way that brings us joy.

On a street where neighbors gather, shots are heard, a young girl
dies. On a campus, students scatter as the angels fall.
May your church be quick to offer loving lead!

May we work for just decisions that bring journey with the Lord.
Yet your people here are griev ing, hurt by weapons that destroy.
Help us turn to you, believing in your way that brings us joy.

Violence claims more lives. In a family filled with love, we speak your truth, O Lord!
Help us build a peaceful future with your world of people here.

Violence claims more lives. In a family filled with love, we speak your truth, O Lord!
Help us build a peaceful future with your world of people here.

In interfaith worship services, this line may be used:
Change the original text of "May your church be quick to offer loving comfort, gentle care."
to interfaith text: "May we all be quick to offer loving, comfort, gentle care."

Scripture Passages in 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
- **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 is brim full of 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.)
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http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/two/giving
and designate the funds to our work with Gun Violence Prevention.

If you would like to get more involved with PPF’s work with Gun Violence Prevention, please contact us at gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org.

This resource was edited by Rev. Margaret Leonard.
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