Gun Violence Prevention

Curriculum - Gun Violence 101
**GOALS & OBJECTIVES:**
To explore the issue of domestic gun violence, becoming more aware of it as a problem, and discerning how our faith community may be called to address it.

By the end of the session, participants will have:
• studied national gun violence statistics.
• reviewed current PC(USA) views on gun violence.
• named initial unease or concerns with the issue.
• identified how it has touched us individually or communally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Adult Christian Education Forum, small group or committee meeting</th>
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| Materials | __Candle__  
| ___Match  
| ___Obituaries  
| ___Computer w/internet connection  
| ___Citizen’s Test on Gun Violence in America  
| ___Paper  
| ___Pen/Pencil  
| ___Bibles  
| ___Gradye Parson’s Letter from “Gun Violence and Gospel Values Report” |

**opening**

- **Read the obituaries** for three different, recent gun violence victims—try to stay as close to the local community as possible. After each is read, **light a candle in memorial of the incident.**

- **Lead the group in this or your own prayer:**
  
  *Holy God, we come together today to learn more about our world and your presence in it. We ask that you be with the families and friends of ___ (naming people about whom we have just read) ___. We pray also for the perpetrators, broken people, just like ourselves. Please give us ears to hear and eyes to see your light in the midst of this pain and darkness. Amen.*

- **Read** Romans 12: 9-21

**presenting & exploring**

- **Watch video:**
  
  “Americans Remember the Loved Ones they’ve lost to Gun Violence”
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlHQJIavfps

*Introducion: Every day, 34 Americans are murdered with guns and every day, 34 families across our country say good-bye to brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, and friends and co-workers. FixGunChecks.org is a project of Mayors Against Illegal Guns — a bipartisan coalition of more than 600 American mayors. The coalition has come together around a simple, straightforward idea: respect the rights of responsible law-abiding*
Americans and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, drug abusers, the mentally ill, and other dangerous people.

• **Take the quiz** provided by the GVP committee either together or separately. Go over the answers together.

• **Read** Grayde Parsons letter.
  
  **Introduction:** *This letter was written by PC(USA) General Assembly Stated Clerk Grady Parsons. It is the opening letter of the resolution on gun violence that was adopted by the 219th General Assembly. This letter explains the necessity for the report and encourages congregations to study and take seriously the problem of gun violence in our communities.*

• **Lead the group in discussion**, going around the room to answer the following questions.

  —Note: allow a moment of silence after each question is asked so that introverts may have the opportunity to consider their answers. It is okay for the discussion to veer from these specific questions as the Spirit leads.—

  o What, if anything, makes you nervous about this topic?
  o Where do you think that nervousness comes from?
  o Do you think this is an appropriate topic for churches to discuss? Why or why not?
  o How has gun violence touched your life? Has it hit close to home? When was the first time you remember hearing about gun violence? Do you think that experience has shaped your view or perception of gun violence?

**closing**

• **Reread** Romans 12: 9-21.

• **Invite the participants to reflect** on what they’ve learned and how they feel called to move forward in the coming week.

• **Name** a time to come back together for further discussion.

• **Close with prayer:**

  *God, may your life-giving Spirit move through us and inspire us. It is hard to hear about the suffering of our world. We know that you promise a better life, a better way of being together. Help us to find hope in the midst of such sadness and hear your call to action. Amen.*
**Citizen’s Test on Gun Violence in America**

1. The PC(USA), other faith communities, The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, The Brady Campaign, and gun violence prevention groups throughout the country are all opposed to hunting, target shooting, and are determined to ban all guns.
   - True ________   False ________

2. Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gunfire within our own country than servicemen and women who were killed in wars in the 20th century.
   - True ________   False ________

3. The annual overall cost of firearms violence for the US economy is _______
   - a. $876 million   b. $28.5 billion   c. $50.4 billion   d. $100 billion

4. Suspected terrorists cannot legally buy guns.
   - True ________   False ________

5. Each year, ________ persons are killed by guns in the US.
   - a. 10,000   b. 17,000   c. 25,000   d. 30,000

6. The most frequently used murder weapon is a[n] ________.
   - a. handgun   b. assault rifle   c. shotgun   d. knife

7. Americans in the ________ own the most firearms.

8. The highest homicide rates per 100,000 population are in the ________.

9. Americans are more likely to be murdered by ________.
   - a. a friend, acquaintance, or family member
   - b. a stranger
   - c. a person who has a criminal record
   - d. a person of another race

10. The Second Amendment guarantees America citizens the right to own any type of firearm for any purpose.
    - True ________   False ________

11. A gun kept in the home for self-defense is ________ times more likely to be used in an accidental shooting, suicide attempt, or criminal assault/homicide.
    - a. 5   b. 7   c. 11   d. 22
12. Recent polls indicate that more than ________ of Americans support the licensing of gun owners and mandatory registration of all handguns.
   a. 10%  b. 25%  c. 50%  d. 75%

13. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is prohibited by law from regulating any firearm or any piece of ammunition for consumer safety.
   True ________  False ________

14. A majority of gun owners do not lock up their firearms in the home.
   True ________  False ________

15. To keep guns away from criminals, terrorists, and other dangerous individuals, the NRA has consistently supported the work of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.
   True ________  False ________

16. The ATF knows the identity of many corrupt licensed dealers who are funneling guns to criminals, but The Tiahrt Amendment is shielding them from the public.
   True ________  False ________

17. The United States is the largest supplier of illegal guns to countries around the world.
   True ________  False ________

18. Many persons who carry guns to town hall meetings, presidential speeches and other political events believe that they have a constitutional right to take violent action against our government should it become “tyrannical.” (not defined)
   True ________  False ________
**Citizen’s Test on Gun Violence in America**

**Answers and Sources**

1. **False**: The PC(USA) has never expressed opposition to hunting, sports shooting, or gun ownership. Present policy advocates a ban on assault weapons.


3. **d. $100 billion**: *Gun Violence: The Real Costs*, by Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, Oxford Press, 2000

4. **False**: Individuals on the FBI’s Terrorist Watch List can legally buy firearms even from licensed dealers, as long as they can pass the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) database. Even if they cannot pass, they can buy guns from private firearm sellers in more than 40 states and in 5,000 gun shows.

5. **d. 30,000**: In recent years, more than 30,000 people have been killed annually in the US by gun violence. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS tool, [http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/indew.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/indew.html)


8. **b. South**: The highest percentage of murder rates are in the South with Louisiana as #1 in the country. FBI, 2008 Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States by State, Table 5, [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_05.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/data/table_05.html)


10. **False**: Even though the Supreme Court recently interpreted the Second Amendment as an individual right for the first time in more than 200 years, Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for the five justices in the majority in that decision, stated, “Like most rights, the right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited,” and noted that it is “not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever. For example, concealed weapons prohibitions have been upheld under the Amendment or state analogues. The Court’s
opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or law imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.” http://www.scotusblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/07-290.pdf


12. **d. 75%**: The 2006 General Social Survey found that 79% of Americans favor laws requiring individuals to obtain a police permit before buying a gun. 77% favored the mandatory registration of handguns. http://www.news.uchicago.edu/releases/07/pdf/070410.guns.norc.pdf


15. **False**: For decades the NRA has drafted and pushed the legislation to decrease the regulatory authority, budget, and manpower of the ATF. In 1995, the NRA infamously described federal law enforcement agents as “jack-booted thugs” in a fundraising letter to members.

16. **True**: Because of the NRA-drafted “Tiahrt Amendments,” the ATF is barred by law from telling the American people the identity of the 1% of gun dealers who are responsible for more than 57% of crime guns recovered from crime scenes in the US.

17. **True**: “Setting the Record Straight: The UN and Small Arms,” New York, June 26 - July 7, 2006; William Hartung and Rachel Stohl, “Hired Guns,” *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2004. As guns and small arms are placed in the hands of vindictive militias and child soldiers, even if they should side with us in “our global war on terror,” the already high death rates of women and children in those regions escalate even further.

18. **True**: Encouraged by the recent Supreme Court decision that declared an individual right to bear arms to defend against government “tyranny,” numbers of “insurrectionist” gun owners are increasingly carrying their guns as a show of force. One who carried an AR-15 outside a presidential speech in Phoenix stated, “We will forcefully resist people imposing their will on us through the strength of the majority with a vote.” The CEO of the NRA, Wayne LaPierre, declared, “The people have a government. “ At 2009 Conservative Political Action Conference he added, “The guys with the guns make the rules.”
Office of the General Assembly  
100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202  
502-569-5424 ~ gradye.parsons@pcusa.org  
www.pcusa.org

THE REV. DR. GRADYE PARSONS  
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  

Fall 2010

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

The 219th General Assembly (2010) adopted the resolution, “Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God’s Call,” in exercise of its responsibility to help the whole church address matters of “social righteousness.” As a social witness policy statement, it is presented for the guidance and edification of both church and society, and determines procedures and program for the ministries and staff of the General Assembly. It is recommended for consideration and study by sessions, presbyteries, and synods, and commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and members for prayerful study, dialogue, and action.

Preventing gun violence is sometimes a quite controversial matter as it can be associated with efforts to ban certain weapons, ammunition, or recreational uses of guns. This resolution presents a different approach, one focused on preventing illegal guns from getting into the wrong hands, especially in our cities. As a Tennessean raised with hunting as part of my culture, I appreciate the difference in strategy though some new regulation is still recommended.

The essential Christian motivation in this is saving lives, as the U.S. annual death toll is approximately 30,000 people, with many more wounded. A bit more than 50% of these deaths are suicides, and Presbyterians fall into the category of those using guns for this purpose when depressed or facing health problems. What receives more attention, of course, is the urban murder rate among young men, often young men of color, and the all-too-regular phenomena of mass shootings, often by young white men, some of whom then commit suicide as well. As a pastor who has dealt with gun deaths and suicides it confirmed my hard experience to learn that owning a gun quadruples our own danger of being shot for whatever reason.

The good news in this report is that Christians and some interfaith neighbors have joined in groups such as “Heeding God’s Call,” which focus on local education and organizing efforts to prevent irresponsible gun sales at shops or gun shows. Considerable work can be done in cities and towns and in the country to make sure gun buyers will not funnel weapons to gangs. These efforts also have a public health dimension aimed to stem vectors of crime weapons from entering cities or regions. The core of the approach is a shared spiritual awakening that seeks to protect not only one’s own neighborhood, but others in perhaps greater need.

I urge you, then, to read, discuss and act on this report. It has a realism about the tragic dimensions and a hopefulness about how all of us can respond with impact, and in ways that strengthen our churches and build relationships with other faith communities. At the back of the booklet are examples of codes of conduct and other “how to” elements.

With prayer for a real decline in gun violence and a rise in gospel values, I commend [the report “Gun Violence and Gospel Values”] to you.

Yours in Christ,

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk
THIS IS A FREE GIFT, 
BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP TO CONTINUE THIS WORK.

Please donate to

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 curriculum was written and edited by Rev. Margaret Leonard and Sara Dorrien.
Cover photo by Katie Rains.