

Whereas, we believe that God working through our Lord Jesus Christ and His Spirit calls us to work for faith, love, peace, justice, reconciliation, and the well-being of all;

And whereas, gun violence in our country is killing, maiming, injuring, and traumatizing enormous numbers of people, including here in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania (Since 2000, more than 500,000 Americans have died from gun violence, more than all U.S. combat deaths since the end of the Civil War, according to Washington CeaseFire. About 30,000 people are killed by firearms each year, according to our Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly [2010]);

And whereas, we believe that there are numerous legal loopholes that allow guns to be possessed by people without adequate background checks;

And whereas, numerous resolutions of policy statements of our Presbyterian Church (USA)'s General Assemblies encourage us to advocate for specific civil legislation when so moved by God, as this is part of our calling as spelled out in the Great Ends of the Church in "the promotion of social righteousness" and part of our historic tradition as Presbyterians ("God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience" of the 200<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (1988) and "Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call" of the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010) are two of such statements);

Therefore, the Presbytery's Peacemaking Ministry Team moves that Pittsburgh Presbytery approve the following letter and send it to the persons and entities named below, and also encourage our congregations to further educate and advocate for safer gun laws as well. They could use this letter as a model to contact their legislators and senators.

In passing this motion, we agree to have this letter sent to: PA State legislators active in the Judiciary Committee and/or from our area, namely, Rep. Ryan Bizzarro, Sen. Jay Costa, Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, Rep. Ron Marsico, Rep. Brandon Neuman, Rep. Joseph Petrarca, Sen. Guy Reschentaler, Rep. Rick Saccone, Speaker Mike Turzai, and Sen. Randy Vulakovich; PA Governor Tom Wolfe; the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette; the Pittsburgh Tribune Review; the Pittsburgh Courier; the Pittsburgh City Paper; and all who receive our Presbytery's P-news by including this motion and the letter in our next P-news email.

**THE LETTER:**

May 19, 2016

Dear Friends,

We write to you as people of Christian faith working for faith, love, peace, justice, reconciliation, and the well-being of all. As such, we are citizens opposed to gun violence in our communities across Pennsylvania. More than 500,000 Americans have died from gun violence since 2000, which is more persons than all U.S. combat deaths since the end of the Civil War (according to Washington CeaseFire). About 30,000 people are killed by firearms each year in our country, according to our Presbyterian Church (USA)'s 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010). According to the Center for Disease Control, the Number One cause of death of black males ages 15 – 34 years is homicide, and we see that the vast majority of those deaths is from guns. The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence analyzes and compares states' gun laws with the states' gun deaths, and they show that states with stronger gun laws have fewer gun deaths per capita, while states with weaker laws have more gun deaths.

We all need to do more to stop these tragedies and the countless more victims who have been injured, maimed, and traumatized, and/or have lost loved ones by gun violence.

We appeal to you to tighten up gun safety laws in Pennsylvania. We urge you to take actions for people's safety.

We urge thorough background checks for any and all purchases of any and all guns, including private sales of long guns. Please remove any loopholes in our laws.

We also urge requiring gun owners statewide to report a missing gun to the police if he/she discovers that it has been lost or stolen.

We urge insistence on background checks even in the case of glitches in the state-sponsored background checks system.

We urge that anyone seeking to conceal and carry loaded firearms off their property must apply for a separate concealed carry permit, an important extra safety check.

We also urge that PICS, the Pennsylvania background-checks system, remain intact. This is an important way of safety-checking for domestic abusers and other dangerous individuals who pose a serious safety threat, yet who often do not show up on the national safety check system.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and all the steps you take to lessen gun violence in the Commonwealth.

Prayerfully yours,

Pittsburgh Presbytery