

A Resolution on Reducing Gun Violence and Praying for its Victims

RESOLVED, That the 149th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark urge our State and Federal legislators to promote policies that reduce gun violence and protect all residents of our state, and to pass common sense gun safety legislation that includes such things as:

- Requiring new handgun models sold in the state to have childproofing features
- Barring gun possession by people with felony convictions
- Barring gun purchases by people with assault or other violent convictions
- Requiring threat assessment programs to identify students at risk of violence
- Having a dedicated office for gun violence prevention
- Requiring law enforcement agencies to collect and report data on use of force incidents
- Limiting qualified immunity for police officers
- Requiring notice to law enforcement when a prohibited person tries to buy a gun
- Requiring that all firearms are stored safely and securely locked; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that all congregations in the Diocese of Newark are urged to designate a regular Day of Mourning for Victims of Gun Violence (for example, during Holy Week), during which they would remember those who have died as a result of gun violence; pray for those who work in law enforcement; and pray for the end of mass shootings and gun violence; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the Secretary of Convention be directed to submit a copy of this resolution to every State and Federal legislator whose jurisdiction falls within the Diocese of Newark; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Diocese encourages the faithful to consider whether those seeking elected office have hindered or been complicit in hindering the enactment of the recommendations herein, when exercising their right to vote.

Submitted by:

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Background:

The Harriet Tubman Regional Ministry Network met most recently (January 24, 2023) after a particularly troubling few weeks of gun violence in the United States. In New Orleans, just days into the new year, a 14-year-old girl was shot to death, along with her father and uncle. A few days after, in a Virginia classroom, a 6-year-old boy pulled out a gun and shot his first-grade

teacher. That news was eclipsed by a mass shooting at a California dance studio that left 11 people dead. A day later and a few hundred miles away, a farmworker opened fire in a beachside town, killing seven coworkers.^[i] As of the night the Harriet Tubman RMN met, there had been 39 mass shooting incidents (where four or more people had been injured or killed by a gun) and 70 people had been killed since the first of the year. As of February 1, 2023, there have been 55 mass shootings and 88 people have died since January 1, 2023.^[ii] While the horror of mass shootings spurred us to submit a resolution on gun violence, the reality is that gun violence goes far beyond mass shootings. Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the U.S. Guns kill more than 38,000 people and cause nearly 85,000 injuries each year.^[iii] In 2020 firearms became the leading cause of death among children 19 and below.^[iv]

Resolution 2022-B006 from this past summer's General Convention urges "dioceses of The Episcopal Church across the United States to advocate for safe gun legislation with their state governments." Additionally, recognizing the need to respond prayerfully to gun violence, resolution 2022-B009 directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to make available a liturgy to assist congregations and communities in responding pastorally to the Mass Shootings which are occurring at an alarming rate throughout the United States of America. That body is currently at work producing resources for a Day of Mourning for Victims of Gun Violence (and would gratefully receive submissions of liturgies developed by congregations in the Diocese of Newark).

^[i] <https://apnews.com/article/united-states-gun-violence-97475ef645314bf3762fdc82f64dae2c>

^[ii] <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting>

^[iii] <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/gun-violence>

^[iv] <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/>