

# GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION TOOLKIT

a resource from WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

## *Sustaining your community's call to action*

*This toolkit supplements an earlier edition released in partnership with Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence for the national Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend held March 15-17, 2013. A DVD of the weekend's proceedings is available, along with sermons on this issue and other companion resources.*

Learn more at [www.nationalcathedral.org/gunviolence](http://www.nationalcathedral.org/gunviolence)

- 1 Deliver a sermon calling for faith-inspired action during your weekend worship service. For one model, watch this sermon by Washington National Cathedral's dean, the Very Rev. Gary Hall, inspired by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: [www.nationalcathedral.org/jan20](http://www.nationalcathedral.org/jan20)
- 2 Organize a public discussion exploring how faith's teachings compel believers to action on issues such as gun-violence prevention. Invite gun victims' families, or clergy from houses of worship that minister every day to our cities, to share their stories and to be partners for future efforts. If your congregation is not directly affected by gun violence, you can use this opportunity to create a new connection with another one.
- 3 Organize a reading of the names of gun victims in your place of worship. A picture in a central location can provide a constant visual reminder of the reality of those lost to gun violence.
- 4 Gather the community together by witnessing on street corners when a crime occurs in your community, or let signs and other sturdy visual displays at your own place of worship help to reflect your concern.
- 5 Plan a study group. One of many excellent books on the topic is *America's Guns: A Theological Exposé* by the Rev. James E. Atwood. A study guide is available online thanks to the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship Church: [www.presbypeacefellowship.org/resources](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/resources)

### THE WITNESS OF HOLY BOOKS

#### *Scriptures Proclaiming Peace*

"All who live by the sword will die by the sword."  
(Matthew 26:52)

"Be amongst the students of Aaron: Love peace and pursue peace. Love people and bring them close to Torah." (Pirkei Avot 1:12)

"Without understanding, people become beasts and demons. [But] when one's light merges into the Light, and one's awareness is joined with Awareness, then one's cruel and violent instincts and egotism depart; skepticism and sorrow are taken away."  
(Guru Granth Sahib)

"Good and evil deeds are not alike. Repel evil with good, and he who is your enemy will become like a dear friend." (Quran 41:34, surat "Fussilat")

"Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." (Psalm 34:14)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

## FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

Homicide rates for the United States are 6.9 times higher than those for the next 22 other populous, high-income countries combined.

Out of the same 23 countries, 87 percent of all firearm deaths of children occurred in the United States.

About 30,000 people are killed by a gun each year in the United States: the equivalent of 85 deaths each day or three each hour.

The number of pre-schoolers killed by guns between 2008 and 2009 was nearly double the number of law-enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

More than half of gun deaths in America are suicides.

Three times more children and teens have been lost to gunfire than military lost in Vietnam.

Nearly 1.7 million youth under the age of 18 live in homes with firearms both loaded and unlocked.

African American children and teens, only 15 percent of the total population, accounted for 45 percent of gun fatalities from 2008 to 2009.

Two-thirds of gun homicides occur in the 50 largest metropolitan areas of the United States.

87 percent of children and teens under 15 years old who have been killed by guns live in the United States.



(Sources: Children's Defense Fund; the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence)

**6** Start a local chapter of Heeding God's Call, a faith-based campaign for gun-violence prevention: [www.heedinggodscall.org](http://www.heedinggodscall.org)

**7** Write to your elected Congressional Representative and US Senators. For written messages to these officials, use the online template here: [www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org](http://www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org)

The following links will assist you in confirming your current representatives and their contact information:  
**HOUSE** [www.house.gov/representatives/find/](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/)  
**SENATE** [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) (click state link in upper right corner)

**8** Let your local and state representatives also know that you continue to grow your advocacy on behalf of gun-violence prevention. While being respectful, be firm and request their commitment to listen and to act on this important issue.

**9** Recognizing the importance of violence with our youth, seek ways to facilitate conversations with young people about video games, movies, and our culture of violence. Help young people who have been impacted by violence write letters to the editor of the local newspaper, and continue seeking new ways of encouraging youth leadership and youth voices.

**10** Meet with your local police to talk about what they suggest and how to involve them in educating people about gun-violence prevention and safe gun handling.

**11** Develop a speakers' bureau (for forums, schools, etc.) once you have done your research and reading: this is an issue for all ages.

**12** **PRAY**—let the power of prayer be felt in all ways on every possible occasion.



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