



As nation mourns rash of recent shootings...

The Office of Public Witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Condemns Lax Gun Control Measures

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“What are our leaders waiting for?”

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will die by the sword.

Matthew 26:50b–52

At our 227th General Assembly (2026) in Milwaukee, the PC(USA) will, once again, give public witness to the scourge of gun violence. Members of the Interim Unified Agency's General Assembly Planning Team recently met with presbytery leaders, where discussions centered around a planned community day for attendees to connect with the community and call for an end to gun violence.

Violence of every sort is reprehensible and repugnant. A recent elevation is the increase in political violence around the country. On Sept. 10, conservative activist Charlie Kirk was murdered as he spoke to an audience in Utah. Americans not only have seemingly become numb to the tendency for violence, but citizens are also more receptive to seeing it as permissible when it is directed toward those with whom they politically disagree.

A 2021 study by Nathan P. Kalmoe and Lilliana Mason determined that both Republicans (11%) and Democrats (11%) responded that it was permissible for their side to kill political leaders in order to achieve their political goals. They surmised that this amounted to 20 million Americans. Charles Homans wrote that more and more Americans are decreasing in empathy for those with whom they disagree. “If condemnations of violent political speech ring hollow in the United States, it’s because they are. This is a country where the language of violence has become too deeply entangled with politics to disentangle with a few pro forma statements, and where a growing share of Americans are comfortable not just with rhetoric but with potential action.” Respondents label rivals as “threats” (60%), “evil” (40%) and “not human” (20%).

One analyst reports that there have been as many as nine school shootings since January, resulting in injuries or deaths. With each shooting, local government and law enforcement officials share the avoidable statistics as gun control advocates call for firearms restrictions. According to the CDC, in 2023, nearly 47,000 people died of gun-related injuries in the United States. To complicate matters, survivors of nonfatal firearm-related injuries greatly outnumber those who die. The emotional scars of similar tragedies may never heal.

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The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has advocated for gun safety for decades on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures. GA commissioners and advisory delegates have passed policy and worked to educate congregations and church leaders on how to address this crisis in communities across the country. The church has been clear where it stands on this very divisive issue. In the late 1960s, the church advocated for gun control and regulations on the sale and possession of firearms of all kinds. Similar resolutions were passed in 1976, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, 2008, 2020 and 2022.

The hearts of Presbyterians are broken, once again, as gunfire opened up at Evergreen High School in Colorado on Sept. 10. The shocking and violent death of conservative youth activist Charlie Kirk on the same day further illustrates the horrific dangers our country faces when it comes to speaking on the public stage. Regardless of your personal or political view, there is no place for violence and bloodshed.

A few weeks ago, a service of Mass for young children at Annunciation Catholic School was devastated by a mass shooting. Minneapolis families spent the past Labor Day weekend preparing to bury their children, while many more kept vigil in hospitals, hoping and praying for healing. Recently, in Louisville, several blocks from the Presbyterian Center, a lone shooter opened fire on a young mother walking her child to a nearby bus stop on the first days of school.

These mass shootings have once again raised ongoing questions for government leaders: What are you waiting for? How many more children must pay the price for your inaction? Children are suffering emotionally and losing their lives due to your inability, your unwillingness, to act.

We reject all excuses and urge all Americans, especially Presbyterians, to continue to respond to these needless deaths with prayer in combination with calling for gun safety legislation to diminish the endless supply of guns in our nation. We can save lives and soothe the emotional health of our children by our commitment to the teachings of a savior revered as the Prince of Peace.