

Statement on Gun Violence

Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to Him for the lives of your children.

Lamentations 2:19 NRSV

Today we raise our collective voices in a communal cry of lament. Faced with a broken world burdened with seemingly relentless evil, we will not remain silent. Trusting in God's sovereignty always, we reaffirm our calling to the words and work of peacemaking and reconciliation.

- We condemn the pervasive and indiscriminate gun violence that robs our communities of the health and security necessary to thrive in interdependent harmony and wholeness. We decry the vile glorification of weaponry throughout our culture that has given rise to vast incidences of preventable homicides, suicides and accidental gun deaths. We join with all our sisters and brothers in Christ in rejecting this needless brutality and advancing instead the countercultural gospel messages of radical love and hospitality.
- We also recognize that the trauma of gun violence extends far beyond the somber counts of the dead and injured. To the witnesses, the first responders, the families, the schools, and the communities at large that are left to pick up the shattered pieces: we see you. We acknowledge your pain, and we pledge to walk alongside you in your grief journey. We pray that our presence can faithfully represent healing and hope in a fallen world.
- Furthermore, we condemn the cultural undercurrents that support and sustain gun violence. We denounce social and economic systems that privilege some while oppressing others, and we declare that the sins of racism, misogyny, and xenophobia are incompatible with faithful living. We remember always that Jesus situated himself among those on the margins of society, and that we are called to do the same.
- Finally, we unequivocally affirm the full dignity and humanity of all God's children. Any language which seeks to dehumanize or otherwise disrespect our neighbors does not come from God. We are compelled anew to embrace and celebrate God's abundant, diverse Creation by advocating for a just and compassionate world.

Informed by and as a practical response to the statement above, we call for a ban on "assault" style weapons, which have been used in numerous mass shooting events, and encourage individuals and congregations to communicate with legislators regarding the issue of gun violence.

The presbytery further instructs the Coordinating Commission to plan and provide an informational workshop regarding the issue of gun violence taking full advantage of resources available through the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Approved by the Presbytery of Transylvania gathered at Grayson, Kentucky, on August 20, 2019.

Michael Ward, Moderator
Linda Crawford, Vice-Moderator
Jerry Utt, Stated Clerk
Philip Lotspeich, General Presbyter