

**Gun Violence in America:
How are Christians to respond?
A Middle Hour Series of Conversations
Sundays, 10:10 a.m. in Barbour Chapel**

September 23- Theological Resources and Presbyterian Responses

September 30- Gun Laws and Gun Violence in America: an overview

October 14- Lament and Loss: Personal Stories of Gun Violence

October 21- Ripple Effects: the Trauma of Gun Violence

October 28- What Can I Do? Opportunities for Advocacy

Nov. 4- Household and Church Safety

Each Sunday, elders on the Session's Gun Violence Education Task Force and members of GPMC will share background, perspectives and resources about gun violence in America and Christian responses. Almost every week will also include small group conversations.

It is our hope that attendees will not only learn more about the epidemic of gun violence in the US and our Christian resources for responding. We also hope that they will engage in conversations that will help them speak faithfully about this topic in the public sphere. Talking and sharing about it with people committed to a common call to love and to the peace of Jesus Christ should better equip us to engage the topic in other circles.

GPMC Session Gun Violence Education Task Force: Sue Acton, Bill Ball, Katie Glovac, Suzanne Hofmann, Amy Kish, Susan Mozena, Wayne Pratt, Mary Snell, Steve Tengler,

Session #1: Theological Foundations of Responses to Gun Violence in the US

Quick Numbers

38,000 people died by guns in the US in 2016

2017 was the worst year yet for mass shootings

There were 3 workplace shootings alone between Sept. 16 and Sept. 23

The majority of gun deaths are suicides

Quick Denominational Backdrop

The PC (USA) has been taking stands on gun violence for over 30 years, including in 2014 at the General Assembly in Detroit. In addition to developing theological responses and various resources, the PC (USA) has taken the following positions and encouraged congregations to do the same:

Declare churches gun-free zones

Advocate for the elimination of the sale of assault rifles

Advocate for universal background checks

Presbyterians are in good Christian company, sharing perspectives and positions with Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, the United Church of Christ and Episcopalians.

Theological Responses

Lament- the world is not as God would have it. We cry out to God on behalf of the victims of all violence.

Grieve- as people of hope, our grief is bounded by the promise of new life. But it is still grief and we have resource to help those on a journey of loss due to gun violence. Christians are called to share those resources and our love with those who are grieving.

Theological Foundations of Responses to Gun Violence in the US (cont'd)

Theological Responses (con'td)

Repent- Scripture calls us to embody a grief that leads to repentance, which itself leads to action to help bring about God's peaceable kingdom. In God's peaceable kingdom, imaged in Isaiah, guns (swords) are ultimately beaten into plowshares and no children or youth are struck down. Reducing access to instruments of violence moves us closer to this vision of peace.

Live Peaceably- guns are one manifestation of a culture saturated with violence in our sports, in our entertainment and in our language. The New Testament calls Christians to lives of non-violence in all that we say and do; we have a chance to shape what we say and play so that it does not engender the violent backdrop to our epidemic of gun violence

Share Hope- knowing that the majority of deaths by guns are suicides, we are called to embody a Gospel that gives hope and envisions a future for people who feel hopeless and take their lives.

Embody Trust- knowing that many guns are purchased for the purpose of perceived safety, our theological grounding as people of trust and purpose can ameliorate and counteract fear and helplessness rather than simply arming ourselves and/or giving into the current state of affairs.

Provide Healing- Jesus heals people of various illnesses, including what we would call mental illness. Christians can work toward a society that provides care and adequate response to the mental health crisis in America.

Build the Beloved Community- we live at a time of deep division and amplified anger. Christians are called to live peacefully in the ways we speak and live. Working to create similar conditions around us is part of our calling.

CITIZEN'S TEST ON GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
(Revised, 10/2016)

1. The Presbyterian Church (USA), other faith communities, The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, The Brady Campaign, and gun violence prevention groups throughout the country are opposed to hunting, target shooting, and are determined to ban all guns used in self-defense.

True _____ False _____

2. Since 1968, more Americans have died by gunfire within our own country than all servicemen and women killed in battle in all US wars since 1775.

True _____ False _____

3. The annual overall cost of firearms violence for the US economy is:

a. \$876 million b. \$28.5 billion c. \$50.4 billion d. \$229 billion

4. Today, 16 years after 9/11, it is now impossible for those on the FBI's "no fly list" to legally buy guns and explosives.

True _____ False _____

5. Each year, an average of _____ persons are killed by guns in the US.

a. 10,000 b. 17,000 c. 50,000 d. 33,000

6. The most frequently used murder weapon is a:

a. handgun b. assault rifle c. shotgun d. knife

7. Americans in what part of the country own the most firearms?

a. South b. Midwest c. West d. Northeast

8. The highest homicide rates per 100,000 population are in the

a. South b. West c. Midwest d. Northeast

9. Americans are more likely to be murdered or assaulted by

a. a friend, acquaintance, or family member
b. a person with a criminal record.
c. a person of another race or religion

10. The Second Amendment guarantees *law-abiding American citizens* the right to own any type of firearm with no restrictions.

True_____ False_____

11. A gun kept in the home for self-defense is ___ times more likely to be used in a murder, accidental shooting, suicide attempt, or be stolen and used in a crime than to stop an intruder.

a. 5 b. 7 c. 11 d. 22

12. Recent polls indicate more than _____% of all gun owners and NRA members support background checks on all guns sold.

a. 10% b. 25% c. 50% d. 80%

13. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is prohibited by law from examining the safety of any gun or piece of ammunition.

True_____ False_____

14. A majority of gun owners do not lock up their firearms in the home.

True_____ False_____

15. 60% of crime guns come from what percentage of legal gun dealers?

a. 25% b. 10% c. 50% d. 5%

16. The United States is the Number 1 supplier of illegal guns to countries around the world.

True_____ False_____

17. Thirty three states have some form of Stand Your Ground Laws which gives the right to use a gun against another without retreating if one "feels threatened."

True_____ False_____

18. When New York City Police Officers fire their guns in shootouts with criminals or public offenders, they hit their targets what percent of the time?

a. 50% b. 45% c. 18% d. 72%

ANSWERS AND SOURCES FOR CITIZEN'S TEST

Updated October, 2016

1. False: These entities never express opposition to hunting, sports shooting, or gun ownership. Our mission is to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people. We do advocate for a ban on assault weapons and large magazine clips.
2. True. Center for Disease Control. National Vital Statistics Report and the U.S. Department of Defense. See also www.politifact.com; Mark Shields of PBS; and Congressional Research Services, *America War and Military*.
3. D. \$229 billion. Follman, Mark. "The True Cost of Gun Violence to America." *Mother Jones*. April 15, 2015. See also *Gun Violence: The Real Costs*, by Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, Oxford Press, 2000. In 2000 the documented cost was \$100 billion.
4. False. Individuals on the FBI's Terrorist Watch List can legally buy firearms from licensed dealers, as long as they can pass the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) database. If they cannot pass, they can buy guns from private sellers in more than 40 states and at 5,000 gun shows throughout the country.
5. D. Each year, more than 33,000 people are killed by guns in the U.S. More than half the deaths are by suicide. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WISQARS tool, <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>
6. A. Handgun. FBI, 2008 Uniform Crime Report, Expanded Homicide Data Table 8, http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/offenses/expanded_information/data/shrtable_08.html Firearms: 67.8 %; Knives or other cutting instruments: 13.4%; Personal weapons (hands, fists, feet, etc.): 5.7%; Blunt objects (clubs, hammers, etc.): 3.9%; Other dangerous weapons: 9.2% Read more at <http://www.snopes.com/politics/guns/baseballbats.asp#yfu69YHjlpULbRHM.99>
7. A. South—followed by the West. "Guns in America: Results of a Comprehensive National Survey on Firearms Ownership and Use," Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig, 1996, <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Cook-et-al.-1996-Guns-in-America.pdf>
8. South. The highest percentage of murder rates are in the South, with Louisiana as #1 in the country. FBI, 2013 Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States by State, https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/tables/5tabledatadecpdf/table_5_crime_in_the_united_states_by_state_2013.xls The most dangerous state in the US is Louisiana; the most dangerous city for African Americans is Omaha, NE.
9. A. a friend, acquaintance or family member. . 2014 FBI Uniform Crime Report, Expanded Homicide Data Table 10, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide>
10. False. The Supreme Court in 2008 interpreted the Second Amendment as an individual right, overturning 200 years of judicial history. Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for the 5-4 majority stated, "Like most rights, the Second Amendment right is not unlimited. It is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose: For

example, concealed weapons prohibitions have been upheld under the Amendment or state analogues. The Court's opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms."

11. C. 22 times. Lengthy studies indicate every time a gun in the home was used in a self-defense or legally justifiable shooting, there were four unintentional shootings, seven criminal assaults or homicides, and 11 attempted or completed suicides. Cited by Rowen, James. "Guns in Homes Pose Greater Risk to Families than Intruders, Data Shows." Milwaukee Journal. December 20, 2012.

12. D. 80% of NRA members and 87% of non NRA members regard these and other measures as complementary, not contradictory to their second amendment rights. "Gun Owners Poll" Frank Luntz- Republican Pollster, July, 2012.

13. True. CPSC can regulate teddy bears and toy guns, but not real firearms and ammunition. Consumer Products Safety Act, 1972.

14. False. A recent North Carolina study of gun owners indicated 43% did not use trigger locks or safely store weapons. (ABC News, May 1, 2015.) 40 % of gun owners keep their guns loaded and unlocked at all times. A 2005 study showed 73% of children under 10 living in homes with guns know the location of their parent's guns. A frequent result of unsecured weapons is suicide.

15. D. 5% of licensed dealers engage in gun trafficking, accept straw purchasers, hire nefarious personnel and lose thousands of guns every year out the back door.

16. True. "Setting the Record Straight: The UN and Small Arms," New York, June 26-July 7, 2006, and William Hartung and Rachel Stohl, "Hired Guns", Foreign Policy, May/June 2004. As guns and small arms are placed in the hands of vindictive militias and child soldiers, even if the country should side with us in "our global war on terror," the already high death rates of women and children in those regions escalate even further.

17. True. Thirty three states support the Castle Doctrine. One is not obliged to retreat if one's home is attacked. Most states have expanded the law to assert a person has no duty to abandon a place where he has a right to be. These laws have given birth to a shoot-first-ask-questions-later mindset.

18. C. 18 %. An analysis, published in 2006 by the Rand Center on Quality Policing at the request of Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, (NYC) found that in the years 1998-2006, the average hit ratio for officers involved in a shooting where the subject does not fire back was 30 percent. During a gunfight, where the target is shooting at officers, the study reported that the hit rate falls to just 18 percent. (Dahl, Julia. "Empire State Building Shooting Sparks Questions About NYPD Shot Accuracy". August 29, 2012. CBS News. NYC)

A Few Rules for Small Group Conversations

There should be only one conversation at a time at each table.

Listen respectfully: social issues are always personal issues to someone. You don't know what someone else's story is.

When responding, "Thank you" is a good start. Follow up questions are a good second response.

Use your "inside voice."

You can respond to others, but we are not engaged in debates. Holster your rhetorical guns.

Give others a chance to speak before you speak again.

Everyone has a right to his or her opinion

Love One Another: they will know we are Christian by our love.

Questions for Small Group Conversation on Sept. 30

- 1.) What statistic from the Citizen's Test was most surprising to you?
- 2.) Is there a statistic or question from the Citizen's Test that hit a little closer to home? Why?
- 3.) As you have watched or participated in conversations about gun violence in the United States, what hinders healthy conversation? What helps?
- 4.) As you have wrestled with this issue, what things have you been led to do in response?