

Session Response to Gun Violence in the United States
October 28, 2018

Over the past year, the session of Grosse Pointe Memorial Church has been engaged in study and discernment on the issue of gun violence. In November 2017 our ruling elders watched “Trigger: the Ripple Effect of Gun Violence,” a documentary produced by the PC (USA). In 2018, the Session formed three task forces comprised of current ruling elders to look into safety, advocacy, and education in related to gun violence. In August 2018, the advocacy task force made recommendations to Session about how we can respond to gun violence. These recommendations were adopted in September 2018.

Our response to gun violence is deeply rooted in our faith. We believe that God has given us a vision for the world as it could be, a peaceable kingdom where everyone will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks,” (Isaiah 2:4, Joel 3:10, and Micah 4:3), where weapons of death and destruction will be transformed into tools for growth, fruitfulness, and life. We believe that the epidemic of gun violence in our country is contrary to God’s desire for our world, and that God grieves each person lost to gun violence.

Jesus has given us a commandment: “Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). So we believe that we are called to love one another with a love that risks something, a love that triumphs over despair, a love that serves others. The scriptures teach us that this love must be exhibited “not [only] in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:18). This love will “not stand by while a neighbor’s blood is shed” (Leviticus 19:16). Indeed, like the Good Samaritan in Jesus’ parable about love of neighbor, we are called to step in to help victims of violence (Luke 10:30-37). Therefore, our discussions and response are not about guns used for hunting, but rather about guns used in violence against people.

In a country where 100,000 people are shot by guns each year, resulting in more than 30,000 deaths each and every year – through murder, suicide, and accidents – we believe that God calls us to respond with compassion and with action.

Therefore, in an effort to model the love and the care of Jesus Christ in the world, the Session of GPMC has voted to take a stand against gun violence in our community and nation, seeking to ban the sale of assault rifles and seeking to require background checks for all gun sales. We have committed to advocate for policy change through letter writing campaigns to our state and U.S. congressional leaders, personal meetings with senators and representatives, and partnership with others in our area who are similarly concerned. In taking action, we concur with the guidance of our own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and join our voices with other denominations including the National Council of Churches, Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, the United Church of Christ, Baptists, Mennonites, Catholics, Jews, Sikhs, and many more in an ecumenical and interfaith effort to halt the epidemic of gun violence in our nation. In so doing, we seek to build momentum by providing support, talent, and resources to push the movement against gun violence forward and create real change.

We believe that God empowers us for this work, and so we take action with hope for change and new possibility. We affirm that “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). We know that not every member of GPMC will agree about how best to respond to gun violence in America. Even so, we, the ruling elders of GPMC, take action on this issue trusting that our witness can be a “light by the lakeshore” both in the actions that we take and in the peaceful ways that we speak to one another about this difficult issue.

The gun violence advocacy task force of the Session invites members of GPMC to join us in this work by:

1. Joining the task force
2. Participating in upcoming letter writing campaigns
3. Joining the small group that will meet personally with senators and representatives
4. Supporting anti-gun violence vigils and rallies with your prayers and presence

If you would like to participate in taking action against gun violence, please contact one of the members of the Session’s task force: Sarah Godbehere, Sarah Bellovich, Jeff Colvin, Jim Hooper, Tim Klepp, Judy Masserang, and Debby Owen.