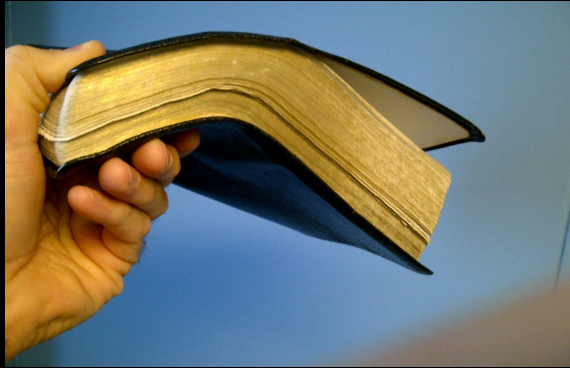




# Gun Violence Prevention

What can congregations do?

# OUR FAITH CALLS US TO BE PEACEMAKERS



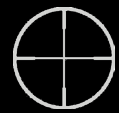
- **Thou Shall Not Kill**
- **Guns as idols**
- **Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called children of God**
- **Called to be Ambassadors of Reconciliation**
- **Christ has come to break down the walls of hostility**
- **Well-being of the community over the well-being of individuals**
- **Christian freedom requires loving our neighbors, not “self-indulgence**



**The Presbyterian Church has studied this issue and created helpful policies and responses.**



- **Gun violence is a Public Health Issue – not a political issue**
- **The focus of our time together will be Gun Safety (not Gun Control)**
- **Sensible Gun Laws (not Second Amendment denial)**
- **We will consider strategies that both gun owners and those who do not own guns can agree upon.**
- **An analogy: in 1921 car safety laws and requirements began to slowly become standard (seat belts, licensing requirements, speed limits, equipment requirements, etc.) Cars were not out-lawed, but they were manufactured and controlled for safety – reducing the death rate by 95%**





# United States Problem with Gun Violence

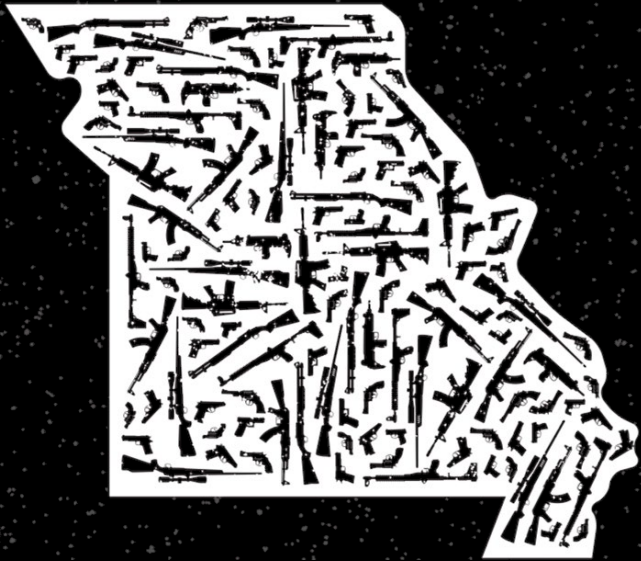


# National Statistics



- In 2020, there were over 44,000 deaths from guns in 2020 – 60% were suicides.
- Since 1970, there have been more deaths from gun violence than all the deaths of all the soldiers in wars going back to the Revolutionary War.
- Americans are 4.4% of the world's population and own 42% of the world's guns
- 48% of American homes have guns – there are 120 guns for every 100 citizens
- 29% of gun owners own more than 5 guns
- Women who are abused are killed 8 times more often if there is a gun in the house; suicides are 5 times higher in gun-owning homes
- In 2016, the cost of gun violence for the US economy was 229 billion
  - 43% of guns in the US had no trigger locks or safe storage
  - 40% of guns were locked and loaded at all times
  - 73% of children under 10 knew where the guns were in their home

# Missouri and St. Louis Statistics



- In 2020, Missouri had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of gun violence deaths (23.9 per 100,000)
- Missouri is the 41<sup>st</sup> weakest state in gun safety laws
- In 2020, the St. Louis region had the highest number of gun violence deaths in the nation
- As of October 25<sup>th</sup>, St. Louis has had 277 gun violence deaths (197 men; 54 women; 26 children)
- Mass shooting on October 24<sup>th</sup> at Central Visual and Performing Arts High School
  - Everything went “right” in terms of security, parental concern, and police intervention
  - But no “red flag “ law, no universal background check law in MO, and recent MO decision to nullify national gun laws led to tragedy

# Public Opinion

- ⊕ **80% of gun owners and 87% of non-gun owners support universal background checks**
- ⊕ **In 2015, 58% of non-owner Americans supported stricter gun laws (46% of gun owners)**
- ⊕ **In 2015, 57% of non-owner Americans supported a ban on assault weapons (49% of gun owners)**



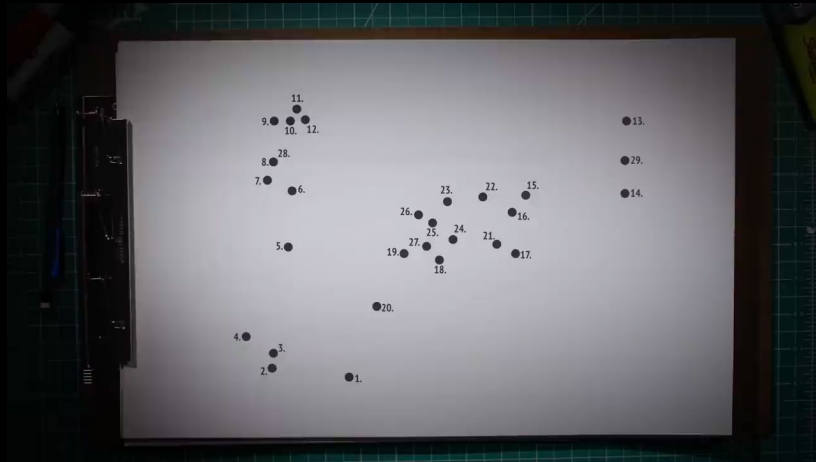


# Presbyterian Policies



## For 2022 General Assembly Actions

[www.pc-biz.org](http://www.pc-biz.org)





# How might Congregations Respond?

## Stories...

- **Stony Point Presbyterian Church (declare church a gun-free zone)**
- **Hudson River Presbytery**
- **Webster Groves Presbyterian Church**
- **First Presbyterian Church – Kirkwood involved in Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)**

# How might Congregations Respond?

- **Presbyterian Peace Fellowship suggestions:**
  - email at [gup@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:gup@presbypeacefellowship.org)
  - [www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence)
- **Download the Preventing Gun Violence Congregational Tool Kit**
  - Adult education suggestions, advocacy guidelines, resource lists
- **Show Trigger – excellent movie created by the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance**
- **Study and implement the Garden to Guns program**
- **Create a book study of Fundamentalism and Where it is Taking America**  
*Written by James E. Atwood, 2017 (available on Amazon)*
- **Study denominational policies and action recommendations: Gun Violence. Gospel Values (2010)**
  - [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/gun-violence-policy.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/gun-violence-policy.pdf)

# How might Congregations Respond?

- **Engage with Moms Demand Action ([momsdemandaction.org/St. Louis](https://momsdemandaction.org/St.Louis))**
  - **Founded after Sandy Hook shootings in 2012**
  - **Merged with Everytown for Gun Safety in 2014**
  - **Missouri has 17 chapters – ST. Louis is the biggest and growing**
- **Focus: education**
  - **Advocacy Days yearly in Jeff City**
  - **Successfully stopped lifting gun restrictions in “sensitive places” for the past five years**
  - **Supports Gun Sense candidates ([GUNSENSEVOTER.ORG](https://GUNSENSEVOTER.ORG))**
  - **Meetings are the first Thursday of every month at 7pm (on Zoom and in person)**
  - **Join MOMS – just Text “READY” 64433**
  - **Follow the Facebook page ([MomsDemandActionMO](https://MomsDemandActionMO))**
  - **Read and discuss “How to Win an Argument about Guns by Nicholas Kristof” (NY Times April 3, 2018)**
  - **Comprehensive look at the issue with statistics and strategies and common sense.**

## Moms Demand Action Be Smart Program

- ⊕ **S**    **secure guns in homes and vehicles**
- ⊕ **M**    **model responsible behavior**
- ⊕ **A**    **ask about unsecured guns in other homes**
- ⊕ **R**    **recognize the risks of teen suicide**
- ⊕ **T**    **tell our peers to be SMART**