

How Churches Can Help Prevent Gun Violence (From Rev. Judy Young and Gettysburg for Gun Sense)

Plan a **Vigil** for Victims of Gun Violence, annually to be held near Dec. 14, the date of the Sandy Hook school shooting. Community leaders can read at vigils also, a police chief, mayor, county commissioners can all participate. Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence and the Newtown Foundation have materials that are easy to print and use. Visit <http://www.decembersabbath.org/Christian/>; or <http://faithsunity.org/> These materials can also be used for vigils at any time during the year.

Show a **Movie** on the topic: *The Armor of Light* is especially good as we seek a closer walk with God on this. It is the story of conversations, and eventually collaboration, as the characters struggle with their understanding of faith and life. The movie asks profound questions about what it means to trust in Christ. *Living for 32* is also excellent. It focuses on a survivor of the Virginia Tech shootings and his discovery of how easy gun purchases at gun shows really are.

Read a **Book** on the topic as a group: There are many informative studies including *Private Guns Public Health*, by David Hemenway. This is a solid, factual, informational book, which emphasizes successes in past public health battles, such as the one for seat belts and shatterproof windshields in cars.

Create an **Activity List** for Gun Violence Prevention work, and **use your gifts** in this ministry. Of great use are Hemenway's book and other books listing activities, not only in the realm of legislation, but in improving gun manufacturing standards (currently guns in the U.S. are the only consumer product with virtually no legally required standards), in working for safe gun storage, in suicide prevention, and in informing the public about gun sense. With the help of local theatre directors, musicians and videographers, Gettysburg for Gun Sense created a four-minute video to spread the word that in the United States, 30 people a day died as a result of gun violence, while in similar countries, two gun deaths a day would be a lot. Visualizations of issues surrounding guns can be effective. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/gettysburg4gunsense/videos/1725883317711600/>

Working for Gun Violence Prevention

Theological work—sermons and liturgies on the topic are available at Faiths United, <http://www.decembersabbath.org/Christian/> . Some Scripture passages about this topic include Exodus 20:13, "You shall not murder," and Matthew 22:37-40 "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself..." In addition, Heeding God's Call, an interfaith gun violence prevention group, has a D.C. chapter: <https://heedinggodscall.org/content/greater-washington-dc> .

Gun Violence Prevention Groups that provide information and want local members who call their representatives and work together for gun sense, include:

- <https://momsdemandaction.org/take-action/> , (Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America)
 - <https://everytown.org/who-we-are/> , (Everytown for Gun Safety)
 - <http://mdpgv.org/> (Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence)
- and others, such as the Brady Campaign and Americans for Responsible Solutions. *Moms Demand Action* and *Everytown* have local chapters.

Safe Gun Storage: Give Safe Gun Storage flyers to parents on Back to School night to help them learn about the importance of this measure.

Suicide Prevention Partnerships: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/gun-shop-project/> Working with licensed gun dealers and psychologists, groups can publicize Suicide Prevention Hotline numbers and safe gun storage information. “Targeting Gun Suicides,” in *The Christian Science Monitor Weekly*, Sept. 5, 2016, tells the story of how gun enthusiasts and mental health experts worked together in New Hampshire to encourage gun dealers to offer the national suicide prevention hotline number and safe gun storage info with sales.

Education: Good books on this topic include *Private Guns Public Health* by David Hemenway and *The Second Amendment: A Biography* by Michael Waldman.

Centers with Information include:

The Center for Disease Control-- <https://www.cdc.gov> ;

The World Health Organization-- http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention

The Harvard Injury Control Research Center: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc>

This information was compiled by the Rev. Judy Young, a Baltimore-Washington Conference pastor. She gathered this information while working with Gettysburg for Gun Sense. Contact her at gettysburg4gunsense@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/gettysburg4gunsense/ More resources are available at www.bwcumc.org/events/critical-conversations/gun-sense-resources-for-local-churches

