

How We Can End Our Pandemic of Gun Violence

October 8, 2016 - Asylum Hill Congregational Church

Speaker Bios & Contact Information

Rev. Dr. James E. Atwood, PCUSA (Ret.) 540-568-8523 / jatwood1959@gmail.com

Jim Atwood has worked in gun violence prevention for 41 years, initially motivated by the murder of one of his parishioners. He serves on the Boards of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. In 2014 at the General Assembly of the PCUSA he was awarded The Peace Seeker of the year. In 2012, he published *America and Its Guns: A Theological Expose*. Although he has been a hunter for over 50 years, his book graphically shows how an absolute, unwarranted fascination with guns and violence can easily morph into idolatry. He closes his book with specific suggestions for action by the faith community which he believes is our nation's best hope to unmask the extremism of the Gun Empire. A forthcoming book, *Gundamentalism and Where It is Taking America* will be released soon. He lives in the Sunnyside Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, Virginia with his wife, Roxana. They have two children and four grandchildren.

Rev. Matthew Crebbin, Senior Minister, Newtown Congregational Church 203-426-9024 / spnewcong@sbcglobal.net

Matthew Crebbin has been Senior Minister of the Newtown Congregational Church, UCC in Newtown, CT since 2007. He has served faith communities in New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. A sought-after preacher and lecturer, his ministry has focused upon a variety of areas including: theological dialogue, ecumenical and interfaith partnerships, grief and trauma ministry, as well as justice and peace advocacy. He currently serves as the Coordinator of the Newtown Interfaith Clergy Association. He has served in leadership capacity on a number of local, regional and international organizations including: Rotary International, Habitat for Humanity, DoJ Newtown Victims Grant, Newtown Action Alliance and various other advocacy, health and human services organizations. Since the events at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012, Rev. Crebbin has worked with a broad coalition of faith leaders in Connecticut and nationally to build bridges of understanding and compassion among diverse communities. He has been a leader in promoting peace and reconciliation near and far and has offered his voice and support to the passing of gun safety legislation and finding other means locally and nationally to reduce gun violence in all communities. Matt is married to Martha and they have four children and a black lab. When not doing ministry or transporting his children to their various activities, Matt enjoys playing music, singing, working on endless projects around his house and playing basketball and golf.

Rev. Henry Brown, Founder, Mothers United Against Violence 860-461-2403 / mothersunited@yahoo.com

Reverend Henry Brown is co-founder of Hartford-based Mothers United Against Violence. Since 2002, Rev. Brown has led marches and rallies to raise community awareness about the effects of violence and to organize community support for change. Rev. Brown seeks to meet with every family of victims of violence in Hartford helping them to find justice for victims and peace for themselves and their neighborhoods. He is a frequent contributor to local radio and TV shows.

Tiana Hercules - herculeslaw@gmail.com

Tiana Hercules is an attorney who is passionate about helping every day members of the community fight for their rights while walking them through a complex legal system. In addition to running a small legal practice, Tiana serves as Vice President and Counsel of Hercules Helping Hands, a home care company that she started with her husband. In addition to her law degree, she also holds an MBA from UConn School of Business. Tiana is an active member in her community and serves on several non-profit boards including NINA, The Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford, Inc., Hartford Food Systems and Girls for Technology, Inc. In her spare time, Tiana provides pro-bono legal representation and serves as a mentor to high school students. Tiana previously served the City of Hartford as an Assistant to the Mayor and was the Project Director for Project Longevity in Hartford, an anti-gun violence initiative. Tiana is a dedicated wife to her husband Meschac and mother to two wonderful boys, Meschac Jr. and Kaiu. The Hercules family are active members of Asylum Hill Congregational Church and reside in the Asylum Hill neighborhood of Hartford.

Lieutenant Sonia Watson - watss001@hartford.gov

Lt. Watson has been a member of the Hartford Police Department for 13 years. She worked as a patrol officer in the community, then as a detective, and a sergeant in Internal Affairs. Lt. Watson is the Commander of the Special Investigative Division [SID] and responsible for the daily operations of the unit consisting of one sergeant, and 13 detectives who investigate all sexual assaults and missing person complaints in the City of Hartford.

**Tom Campbell, Board Member, Newtown Action Alliance and The Newtown Foundation
& President, Greater Danbury Chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
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I am a family member of a gun violence victim: my dad was murdered in New York City 50 years ago last Christmas leaving a widow and 7 children. His killer was a young man from our working class neighborhood who had taken his father's revolver from their home earlier that evening. It had been left loaded and unlocked in a bureau drawer. After wrestling with the repercussions for more than a few years, the non-physical wounds started to scab and eventually scar over. Eventually I started my own family and became immersed in its joys and hurts. But then things changed with the massacre at Sandy Hook. At the time I lived about 12 miles away from the school and had already been active in the community as a high school level tutor. Thankfully none of my students nor their families were directly involved, nevertheless my 'scars' proved less protective than I thought. Anger and sorrow and frustration, sometimes one at a time, sometimes in waves. Luckily I found many others with the need to do something, first with the Brady Campaign and then The Newtown Foundation and Newtown Action Alliance, where we can help those similarly afflicted as well as work towards a safer future.