

**Stony Point Presbyterian Church
Commitment to Work to End Gun Violence
Spring 2012**

Let us love, not in word or speech, but in deed and in truth. – 1 John 3:18

Introduction

Our commitment as a congregation to study the matter of gun violence began with the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and eighteen others, six of whom died, including nine-year-old Christina Taylor Green, in Tucson, Arizona in January of 2011. Our year of discernment has come to an end with the shooting of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed, seventeen-year-old in Sanford, Florida. In between, shootings have been a daily occurrence in communities all across our country – so common, in fact, that they don't even warrant a news story unless they are particularly sensational, like those that occur in schools or workplaces.

Throughout this year, we have read and studied the PC(USA) document, ***Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call***.¹ We have engaged in theological discourse and reflection about the spiritual impact of such pervasive violence in our culture. We have learned, lamented, resisted and grieved. We have been challenged, as the document has asked us, to wake up and to act. "To honor the silenced voices we must pay attention, speak out, and give witness to God's "No" to gun violence. (*GVGV, p. 18*)

At this point, we feel ready to do just that: to commit ourselves to action.

We respectfully request the session and congregation to endorse our efforts to be peacemakers in the world around us.

We offer the enclosed statement as a summary of our study to date and the actions we feel called to, as a community of believers with "open hearts, minds and doors."

Gun Violence Study Group Participants:

Sheena Bishop	Katie McGarry
Edythe Black	Mati Moros
Jackie Campbell	Alexa Moros Taylor
Patty Campbell	Andrew Torres
Madelyn Drost	Nancy Valera
Bridget McGarry	Eugee Whyte

Facilitators:

Margery Rossi
Rick Ufford-Chase

¹ *Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call*, Office of the General Assembly, PC(USA), 2011.
<http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/gun-violence-policy.pdf>

Our Statement on Gun Violence

We, as members of Stony Point Presbyterian Church, in an effort to model the love and the care of Jesus Christ in the world, commit ourselves to work actively to reduce gun violence in our community and across our nation. We hear Jesus' call to us to be peacemakers and lift up this special concern as we pray, worship, study and take action together in the world.

We concur with the PC(USA) document, ***Gun Violence, Gospel Values***, that our country has made an idol out of our historic, constitutional commitment to protect the right to own guns. We are clear, however, that neither the study nor actions of our small group are an attempt to challenge the constitution of the United States of America, but instead, bear witness to the spiritual, emotional, physical, mental and financial consequences of such idolatry. We are also clear that this discussion is not about guns used for hunting. (GVGV, p. 17)

We differ:

We are not of one mind about the appropriateness of owning handguns for personal safety, but we have agreed to disagree on this matter – in love for one another and an effort to create a Christian community that allows for differences of opinion.

We are of one mind:

In a country where 100,000 people are shot by guns *each year*, resulting in 30,000 deaths *each and every year* – through murder, suicide, and accidents – we will do all that is within our power to stop the madness.

- ✘ **We oppose the legalization of assault and military style weapons** in our community and in all communities across our country.
- ✘ **We support creation and enforcement of laws requiring full background checks** in all gun stores and at all gun shows, and we will hold businesses in our community accountable to perform those background checks before the sale of every weapon.
- ✘ **We condemn, and will work to thwart those gun dealers who act irresponsibly** by allowing the practice of “straw buying” to flourish, thereby undermining responsible laws that are in place to protect our public servants and all members of our communities.

Our Commitments:

Together, we will **continue to pray** for an end to our nation's addiction to guns, and for an end to the epidemic of gun violence in our country.

We will continue to **lift these concerns to God** as we worship together.

We will continue to **educate ourselves** in an effort to be thoughtful, thorough and prepared as we take action.

We will seek opportunities to **work in partnership** with law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other churches to stop gun violence.

We will **witness publicly** about our concern through nonviolent vigils and demonstrations.

We will be watchful for opportunities to **act together to reduce the violence**.

God has given us so much, and we have Good News to share with one another and with others. Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is among us, and that we are called to the daily task of creating that Kingdom. We pray that others will join us as we step boldly into the life lived in tension between enjoyment of the good gifts God has given us and work in the world because of all Jesus has called us to do and be.

Let us be clear: this is not a call to arms but to community. (GVGV, p. 17)

June 2012

Stony Pt. Discussion Questions

1. Is it your experience that people make or turn to idols when they are in difficult circumstances?
2. How are the consequences of guns overlooked?
3. Does language really affect behavior?
4. Do those violent terms Jim referred to actually promote violence in our society? Or are they simply colorful expressions to spice up our conversations?
5. Does America's trust in nuclear weapons and more firepower for its handguns and assault weapons, really stem from violent terms in our language?
6. Why does the human search for power ultimately disappoint us?
7. How do you deal with the enemies that scare you? If you don't have enemies, why not?
8. Does having a gun in hand or close by really change one's personality?
9. Living in the land of the free and the home of the brave is human sacrifice an appropriate term?
10. Is Jim too hard on the church, the Body of Christ?