

WEEK OF ACTION 2021
WORSHIP SERVICE RESPONDING TO GUN VIOLENCE
Sunday, August 29
14th Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 17

This order of worship and its liturgical elements may be used in any time of worship that seeks to respond to the epidemic of gun violence.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

Have three candles prepared for lighting during the Call to Worship

Voice 1: We gather this day in lament, in commitment and in hope, remembering and honoring the lives of countless children of God, slaughtered in _____ (name communities impacted by gun violence). They gathered in daily routine for joy, for study, for play, for errands, for praise and in community, and their lives were ended by acts of violence and hate.

Voice 2: We light these candles to honor their lives; the thousands more-- families, neighbors and friends-- whose lives also have been shattered by violence and loss; and to acknowledge in confession and sorrow the loss of life still to come, as public violence in our nation continues unchecked.

Voice 3: This is the time of ending, and the time of beginning again.
We light this candle to honor victims, surround survivors with love, and commit ourselves to a vision of neighborhoods and nations shaped by justice, dignity and peace.
Light 1st candle

Voice 4: This is the season for remembering, and for being remembered by God
We light this candle for those who are too many to name, whose lives have been ended or shattered by hatred and gun violence.
Light 2nd candle

All: This is the season for being, and for being known in God's image.
We light this candle to commit ourselves to work for a world free from violence and hate.
Let us worship God.
Light 3rd candle

HYMN #764 GTG

PELAS DORES DESTE MUNDO

For the Troubles and the Sufferings/Pelas Dores Deste Mundo

Or see Appendix A for a list of possible opening hymns

CALL TO CONFESSION

THE CONFESSION OF 1967

To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as God's reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares God's labor of healing the enmities which separate people from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His human life involves the church in the common life of all people. His service to humankind commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all human suffering so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of persons in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on the inhumanity that marks human relations, and the awful consequences of the church's own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of human life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

(Confession of 1967 9.31-32)

PRAYER ON CONFESSION (unison)

God of peace, Holy One of justice, we confess to you this day that we are hurting, angry and confused. In a world of hurt and violence, have you abandoned us? Our hearts are broken with grief and loss; our spirits are weary with our failure to end the unrelenting scourge of gun violence. We see the faces, we remember the stories, we recall how many times we have gathered to march, to pray, to lift our voices in advocacy, to say, "never again!" We are tired, we are weighed down by our failure to change ourselves or transform our nation, we need your mercy, and the cleansing power of your justice. Forgive our inaction and our lack of belief in your kingdom. *Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.* Renew our hope, help us toward each other, and draw us ever toward your love and justice. In the name of Jesus the Christ, we pray. Amen.

Silence for personal prayer.

INVITATION TO RESTORATION

IONA

Don't Be Afraid
Sung by one voice

ASSURANCE (Psalm 126, adapted)

When God restores the exiles to Zion it will seem like a dream. Then our mouths will fill with laughter, our tongues with joyful song. Then they will say among the nations, "God has done great things for them." It is for us that God is doing great things, we will rejoice. God restore our fortunes, as streams revive the desert. Then those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. Those who go forth weeping bearing seeds of justice, dignity and peace shall come home with shouts of joy bearing their sheaves.

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Exchange signs of Christ's peace.

PONDERING

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Let us be still, held by the presence of God.
Let us wait with hope to see what Holy Mystery unveils.
Let us listen with our whole hearts.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Consider scripture passages identified by the Common Lectionary for this date or see Appendix B for a list of possible texts.

SERMON

HYMN

Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone

Chris Tomlin

Or see Appendix A for a list of possible hymns to follow the sermon

PRACTICING

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

THE CONFESSION OF BELHAR

One: We believe in one God, Father Son and Holy Spirit,
who gathers, protects and nourishes the Church
from the beginning of the world to the end.

**All: The Church is holy; the Church is universal;
it is the fellowship of God's children,
called together from the whole of humanity
to proclaim God's wonderful deeds.**

One: We believe that the reconciling work of Christ
gives birth to a uniting Church,
because Church unity is a gift from God
and a goal we need to strive for.

**All: The unity of the Church must become visible
so that the people around us can see
how separation and hatred are overcome in Christ.**

One: We believe that genuine faith in Jesus Christ
is the only condition for membership in this Christian Church.

**All: We praise God that race, class, gender, or culture
does not determine who belongs to this Church.**

One: We believe that God has entrusted to the Church the message of reconciliation;

and that the Church is called to proclaim and embody this reconciliation;
to be peacemakers;
and to believe and to witness that God conquers all powers
of sin and death, of hate, bitterness and enmity,
through his life-giving Word and Spirit.

**All: We praise God that the gospel does not separate people
on the basis of race, gender, class, or culture,
but is the power of reconciliation in Christ.**

One: We believe that God wants to bring about true justice
and lasting peace on earth;
we believe that God is, in a special sense,
the God of the suffering, the poor and the downtrodden.

**All: We praise God who gives justice to the oppressed
and bread to the hungry;
who sets captives free and makes the blind to see;
who protects strangers, orphans and widows.
and obstructs the plans of the wicked.**

One: We believe that the Church belongs to God
and that it should stand where God stands:
against injustice and with those who are wronged

**All: We commit ourselves to reject all forms of injustice
in ourselves and amongst us;
and to struggle against all forms of injustice
and every teaching that allows injustices to flourish.**

One: We are called to confess and to do all this
in obedience to Jesus Christ, our only Lord,
even if authorities or laws oppose this,
even if punishment and suffering may be the consequence.

**All: Jesus is Lord! We will follow Him!
To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be honour and glory for ever and ever.**

OFFERING

*In addition to gifts and tithes, consider an offering of letters to local, state and national leaders
advocating for an end to gun violence.*

DEDICATION OF OUR GIFTS, ACTIONS AND ADVOCACY #750 GTG

Goodness is Stronger Than Evil

Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate.
Light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours, victory is ours through God who loves us.

Victory is ours, victory is ours through God who loves us.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE/LORD'S PRAYER

Gracious God, we come yearning for peace in a broken world. We come searching for new relationships: with God, with one another, with a broken world....

prayers may be spoken aloud.

We come struggling to claim the violence within us. We come celebrating your redemptive love, for truly You alone bring restoration and healing...

prayers may be spoken aloud.

Bestow your healing touch upon all who hurt this day,
that our lives may be transformed by your presence.
Guide us as we look to the light beyond the valley of the shadow of death....

prayers for healing, justice and courage may be spoken aloud.

Be with us and bless us as we are renewed by your spirit to find new alternatives to violence, especially in our roles as Christian peacemakers. May we be changed forever by your vision of peace.

Through Christ, the Prince of Peace who taught us to say when we pray,
Our Father (Creator)...

SENDING

CLOSING HYMN #103

O-SO-SO

Come Now O Prince of Peace/O-So-So

CHARGE

One: At the prayer vigil for those murdered in San Bernardino, Bishop Barnes, who grew up in East Los Angeles, said "amen" would be repeated many times during the evening. "We will nod our heads and grieve with the words that are shared. But what comes after the amen? What will we do in God's name and in prayer after we leave this church?" he asked. "Our 'amen' is our willingness to have God lead us on to guide our vision and our actions. Let us find God calling us to be better neighbors, to be better at loving each other, to be committed workers for justice and peace, to be strong witnesses to God's presence and God's mercy in our home, our community and the world. Let our 'amen' be a call to merciful discipleship in the name of our Lord."

ALL: **Amen! May our grief be more than sentiment and our "amen", more than words. God, lead us on that our work may transform our neighborhoods into communities of inclusion and peace.**

BLESSING

May the God of compassion, justice and peace surround you with grace.
May Christ our light use as his hands and heart in the world.
May the Spirit of unity fill us with courage and make us one.

Amen.

APPENDIX A.

Possible Hymns and Songs for Addressing Gun Violence

From The Presbyterian Hymnal (1990)

- God of Earth and Altar p. 291^{[L][SEP]}
- Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace p. 374
- Song of Hope p. 432^{[L][SEP]}
- Day of Peace p. 450

From Glory to God (2013)

- Come Great God of all the Ages, p. 309^{[L][SEP]}
- How Clear is Our Vocation, Lord, p. 432^{[L][SEP]}
- God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us, p. 436
- I've Got Peace Like a River, p. 623^{[L][SEP]}
- We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom, p. 378^{[L][SEP]}
- Dona Nobis Pacem, p. 752^{[L][SEP]}
- Make Me a Channel of Your Peace, p. 753
- For the Troubles and the Sufferings/Pelas Dores Deste Mundo, p. 764
- How Long, O God, Will My Prayers Be in Vain? p. 779
- In Deepest Night, p. 785
- God Weeps With Us Who Weep and Mourn, p. 787
- There is a Balm in Gilead, p. 792
- We Cannot Measure How You Heal, p. 797

Other Hymns

Special thanks to Presbyterian hymn writer Carolyn Winfrey Gillette who gives permission to use these hymns in worship and by ecumenical groups committed to ending gun violence:

- [I Cried to God](#)^{[L][SEP]} FINLANDIA 11.10.11.10.11.10 ("Be Still, My Soul") was originally written after the shootings at Umpqua Community College in 2015
- [God of Mercy, You Have Shown Us](#)^{[L][SEP]} BEACH SPRING 8.7.8.7 D ("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending") was originally written at the request of the PCUSA UN Office for the 2009 International Day of Peace
- [God, We Have Heard It](#)^{[L][SEP]} HERZLIEBSTER JESU 11.11.11.5 ("Ah, Holy Jesus") was originally written on the day of the Columbine School shootings
- [O Christ, You Did No Violence](#)^{[L][SEP]} AURELIA 7.6.7.6 D ("The Church's One Foundation") was originally written to be part of a worship service in the [Patterns of Violence](#) issue of Christian Reflection journal.
- [They Met to Read the Bible](#)^{[L][SEP]} ST. CHRISTOPHER 7.6.8.6.8.6.8.6 ("Beneath the Cross of

Jesus") was originally written after the Emanuel AME Church shootings in Charleston ([A New Hymn for Charleston | The New Yorker](#))

- [When People Die by Hatred](#)^[1]_[SEP] AURELIA 7.6.7.6 D ("The Church's One Foundation") was originally written after the shootings of unarmed African American men and police in Dallas
- [To a Place of Celebration](#) EBENEZER 8.7.8.7 D ("Why Do Nations Rage Together") was originally written in response to the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shootings in Orlando. (see [A Hymn for Orlando](#) National Public Radio)

See <http://carolynshymns.com/index.html>

Praise Songs and Other

- "Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone" by Chris Tomlin
- "Still" by Reuben Morgan
- "Healing is in Your Hands" by Chris Tomlin, Christy Nockels, Daniel Carson, Matt Redman, Nathan Nockels
- "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Joel Houston, Matt Crocker, Salomon Lighthelm
- "10,000 Reasons" by Matt Redman
- "Blessings" by Laura Story
- "Healing Rain" by Michael W. Smith
- "In Christ Alone" by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend
- "Even When it Hurts" by Joel Houston
- "That Where I Am" by Rich Mullins
- *When Grief is Raw: Songs for Times of Sorrow and Bereavement*, a collection by John L. Bell and Graham Maule, the Iona Community. Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 1997.

APPENDIX B.

Possible Scripture Passages for Addressing Gun Violence

These texts certainly do not exhaust the passages that may speak to the challenges of gun violence, public violence and mass shootings. These are only a few of the passages that may be instructive in study, preaching and reflection on the epidemic of gun violence and the challenges we face in preventing it.

HEBREW SCRIPTURES

- Genesis 1:27 - We are created in the image of God
- Exodus 20:13 - Thou shall not kill
- Leviticus 19 - God's shalom to reign in all aspects of life
- Deuteronomy 21:1-9 - Take Responsibility for a murder
- Deuteronomy 30:11; 19-20 - Choose life that you may live
- Isaiah 2:3-4 - Beat swords into plowshares
- Isaiah 9:5-7 - Unto us a child is born
- Isaiah 11:1-9 - A vision of peace
- Isaiah 30:9 - Those who spurn God's call to righteousness
- Isaiah 40: 1-11 - Comfort for God's people
- Isaiah 58:12 - Being a repairer of the breach
- Jeremiah 29: 1 - Seek the Welfare of the City
- Zechariah 8:1 - Zechariah's vision of New Jerusalem

NEW TESTAMENT

- Matthew 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers
- Matthew 5:13 - You are the salt of the earth, light of world
- Matthew 6:10 - Thy Kingdom Come on earth
- Matthew 19:19 - Love your neighbor as yourself
- Matthew 26:52 - Those who live by the sword die by it
- Luke 10:25-28 - Thinking is important The Great commandment
- Luke 22:47-53 - Jesus and Violence
- I Corinthians 13 - Greatest of these is love
- II Corinthians 5:16 - God gave us the ministry of reconciliation
- Galatians 6:7-10 - Don't lose heart
- Ephesians 6:10 - Wrestling against a gigantic evil
- Philippians 2:1 - The Mind of Christ
- Revelation 5:9-13 - The victor over evil is Lamb who was slain
- Revelation 11:15 - Kingdoms of world become kingdoms of Christ
- Revelation 19:6 - God's certain victory over evil