

In May of this year gun violence has led to:

May 1st: 2 people shot and seriously injured at Benton Middle School in Prince William County on a Sunday morning while little children were playing football

May 14th: 10 African American people who were grocery shopping and working in Buffalo, New York murdered

May 15th: a 15 year old shoots 2 adults to death in Woodbridge, Virginia

May 24th: 19 4th graders and their 2 teachers murdered in Uvale, Texas

May 24th: A 9 year old shot while playing in her neighborhood in Woodbridge, Virginia—she is in critical condition

Our country needs prayers as we struggle to deal with the ongoing gun violence we are living with. We also need to act and speak out against gun violence.

The PC(USA) and its predecessor bodies have addressed gun violence through the actions of many General Assemblies in the last fifty years. Beginning in the late 1960's, in response to the assassinations of public leaders, the General Assembly called for "...control [of] the sale and possession of firearms of all kinds." Similar resolutions were passed again in 1976, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1996 and 1998.

Each resolution reflected a sense of moral urgency in response to rising gun violence and the cultural trends that contributed to it. These resolutions have called on the church to be involved in education and advocacy at the federal, state, and community level to prevent gun violence. In 1991 and 1996, these resolutions were backed up with strong educational curricula as well as comprehensive strategies for advocacy.

On Gun Violence Prevention As Adopted by the 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

God has provided us with the elements to be agents of change in the world. The change needs to be comprehensive: we need to address the idolatry of guns, the violence that permeates our culture, our obsessions with personal rights over public responsibility, the practices of widespread and indiscriminate sale of military style weapons, as well as the legislation necessary to regulate the accessibility and sale of military weapons disguised as "sporting guns." We must

keep our “eyes on the prize,” of preventing gun violence and the unnecessary deaths and injuries that result. Enough blood has been spilled. We affirm that through good organizational effort, animated by the passion for justice that comes to the people of God through the Holy Spirit, gun violence can be dramatically reduced.

A Presbyterian Prayer for Action:

Gracious God, whose mercy never ends, whose Spirit brings the Kairos moment for change: We confess our past willingness to abide the deaths of over one million, six hundred thousand souls lost to gun violence since 1968 -- the children, the parents, the distraught, as well as millions more injured, ruined, orphaned, widowed. Help us to comprehend this carnage and not become numb. We give thanks for the long witness of the General Assembly and all Presbyterians who are already engaged in preventing gun violence. We thank you for raising up the students to lead us with marches, walk-outs and passion born of pain. We call upon you, Lord; we have nowhere else to turn. Galvanize all of us, every congregation in the Presbyterian Church. Wake us up in our pews and our lives; do not let Christ find us asleep on this watch. Rather, Lord, grant to our church members, both those of us who own guns and those of us who do not, a unity of purpose to change the national debate on gun violence. Show us the path. At all the places where you are proclaimed, give us courage to stand against principalities and powers. Grant us the joy of using the gifts that you provide -- energy, intelligence, imagination and love-- to help our communities and our nation heal from this tragedy and sorrow. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

Adapted from an Overture to the 223rd General Assembly, PC(USA)