



Presbyterian  
Peace  
Fellowship

## Worship/Vigil/Action Resources for Times of Gun Violence

Contents: Scripture, Hymns, Prayers, Prayer Flags, Full Worship Service/Vigil,  
Action Suggestions

See also Resources on Trauma from the Everytown Survivors' Network:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dUljvMLRH3JEylsVXQ3DjoYIxdAQrk1S/view>

### Scripture Passages for Addressing Gun Violence

- **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 30:9ff** - 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: 1ff** - Seek the Welfare of the City
- **Zechariah 8:1ff** - Zechariah's vision of New Jerusalem
  
- **Matthew 5:9** - Blessed are the peacemakers
- **Matthew 5:13ff** - 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 5:16ff** - God gave us the ministry of reconciliation
- **Galatians 6:7-10** - Don't lose heart
- **Ephesians 6:10ff** - Wrestling against a gigantic evil
- **Philippians 2:1ff** - 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

# HYMNS Relating to Gun Violence

Gun Violence Prevention Hymns by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette [www.carolynshymns.com](http://www.carolynshymns.com)

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God, Our Nation Feels the Loss Tune: Pilot/Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me (Written for Uvalde, TX. See Below)  
[https://www.carolynshymns.com/god\\_our\\_nation\\_feels\\_the\\_loss.html](https://www.carolynshymns.com/god_our_nation_feels_the_loss.html) <https://youtu.be/O08ec7hkQ8c>

I Cried to God Tune: Finlandia  
[https://www.carolynshymns.com/i\\_cried\\_to\\_god.html](https://www.carolynshymns.com/i_cried_to_god.html)

If We Just Talk of Thoughts and Prayers\* Tune: O Waly, Waly (See Below)  
[https://www.carolynshymns.com/if\\_we\\_just\\_talk\\_of\\_thoughts\\_and\\_prayers.html](https://www.carolynshymns.com/if_we_just_talk_of_thoughts_and_prayers.html)

## God, Our Nation Feels the Loss

PILOT 7.7.7.7.7 (“Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me”)

God, our nation feels the loss  
as our children pay the cost  
for the violence we accept,  
for the silence we have kept.  
Rachel weeps for children gone;  
God of love, this can’t go on!

Jesus, Lord, we hear you say,  
“Don’t turn little ones away!”  
May we build a kinder land  
where our children understand:  
Every child here matters more  
that the guns we clamor for.

Holy Spirit, wind and flame,  
send us out in Jesus’ name.  
May we shout and say, “Enough!”  
May we build a world of love—  
till the sounds of weapons cease,  
till our young can grow in peace.

Tune: John Edgar Gould, 1871.

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Email: [carolynshymns@gmail.com](mailto:carolynshymns@gmail.com) New Hymns: [www.carolynshymns.com](http://www.carolynshymns.com)

Permission is given for free use of this hymn for churches and ecumenical service.

**Hymn Note from the Hymn Writer :** See the reference to the Slaughter of the Innocents: “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more” (Matthew 2:18). This hymn was written in remembrance of the beloved children of God who died in the school shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Many of us, as individuals, do not accept violence, keep silence, or clamor for guns. Yet, as a nation, we do these things, and as a nation, we need to repent; we need to turn around and live a different way. All of us are called to do more than sing and pray; please work for gun safety laws in your community and state.

## From the blue *Presbyterian Hymnal*:

3 Comfort, Comfort You My People  
332 Live into Hope  
333 Seek Ye First  
337 Isaiah the Prophet has Written of Old  
385 O God, We Bear the Imprint of Your Face  
386 O for a World  
401 When Will People Cease Their Fighting  
407 When a Poor One

434 Today We All Are Called to be Disciples of the Lord  
450 O Day of Peace  
543 Abide with Me  
527 Near to the Heart of God  
530 O Lord of Life, Where'er They Be

From *Glory to God Hymnal*:

100 My Soul Cries Out/Canticle of the Turning  
753 Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Other: Let There be Peace on Earth

408 Where Cross the Crowded Way of Life  
420 God of Grace and God of Glory

## **If We Just Talk of Thoughts and Prayers**

*Tune: O WALY WALY 8.8.8.8*

*Hymn text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette*

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If we just talk of thoughts and prayers  
And don't live out a faith that dares,  
And don't take on the ways of death,  
Our thoughts and prayers are fleeting breath.

If we just dream of what could be  
And do not build community,  
And do not seek to change our ways,  
Our dreams of change are false displays.

If we just sing of doing good  
And don't walk through our neighborhood  
To learn its hope, to ease its pain,  
Our talk of good is simply vain.

God, may our prayers and dreams and songs  
Lead to a faith that takes on wrongs —  
That works for peace and justice, too.  
Then will our prayers bring joy to you.

## Prayers for and by Students

*These prayers were written by students in the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown, NY Middle and High School Youth Groups on the one year memorial of the Parkland High School shooting. We thank the adult leaders who worked with these students: Timothy Wotring, Jen Burns, Stephen Thompson, Christian Pisco and Rev. Margery Rossi. We also thank Rev. Tami Seidel and Stephanie Hare, for permission to distribute these prayers throughout the denomination.*

### Prayer of Confession #1

Gracious God,  
You are generous in forgiveness  
You are with us, lovingly guiding us  
You encourage us to be our best

We confess that we have not done our best in protecting our children.  
Lockdowns in school put students in a negative, stressed, and pressured environment;  
they distract them from their education and goals.  
Gun laws could improve a lot,  
yet lawmakers seem more concerned with money than people's lives.  
Mental Health, too, is not being addressed in schools;  
students are suffering in silence.

Yet, you, O God, call us to do right and create a world at peace.

To do so:

We should create a culture where peers can talk to each other without fear of being judged.  
Group discussions should be the norm, and not the exception.  
Teachers should also be trained in facilitating such conversations.  
Schools should have more accessible therapists;  
ones who make the first move in talking with students;  
ones who are authentic and genuine.  
We should educate others on how guns should not be used for clout  
and the danger of these weapons.

May we strive to live without fear and strife.  
God, grant us a good and fresh start. Amen.

- Joshua, Grade 6; Lionel, Grade 9; Marina, Grade 9; Tiffany, Grade 11

### Prayer of Confession #2

Almighty God,  
We confess that we can't solve the problem of gun violence, that we started,  
and we aren't ready for anything that is to come.  
All of our "solutions" are just avoiding the *real* problem.  
We ask for forgiveness, for instead of finding solutions for gun violence,  
we practice non-effective lockdown drills.  
This is not good enough and it keeps happening.  
We hope that we can find permanent solutions to stop gun violence,  
such as having a better understanding of mental illnesses;  
figuring out where the guns are going,  
who has them and what they plan to do with them.  
We hope we can convince people to stop using guns for violence. Amen.

-Anthony, Grade 9; Brynne, Grade 7; Jonathan, Grade 9; Kithara, Grade 6

## Psalm of Lament

Dear God,

Students everywhere are suffering

Bullets are raining down on them and nothing is changing.

We have faith that through your work in the world, things will get better.

We have faith that you will end the cycle of gun violence.

Please help our leaders to create sensible gun laws

and bring safety into our hallways and classrooms.

We praise you in our everyday lives and give thanks for your never ending love.

-Ben, Grade 9; Emma, Grade 9; Ethan, Grade 10; Julia, Grade 7

## Litany of Remembrance and Advocacy

Let us remember our fellow students

who have fallen to people with malcontent in their hearts and guns in their hands.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

Let us remember the teachers, school administrators and others

who have died trying to keep kids safe.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

Let us remember the innocent people who die every day from needless gun violence.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

Let our students go to school without fear of violence or lockdown drills

that don't solve anything.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

Let us take a stand and get guns out of the hands of people who could abuse them.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

Let us take action against racism,

a primary cause of unreasonable police shootings of young people of color.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

Let us take *real* action and stand behind our "thoughts and prayers" instead of speaking

empty words. Let this be a call to all people in the community to work

for a new era of gun laws.

**We will stand up against gun violence.**

-Faith, Grade 9; Luke, Grade 11; Natalie, Grade 12; Sam, Grade 7

## Prayer Flags

Materials needed: rope, fabric squares about 5 x 7 in different colors, markers or pens and some way to clip, sew or glue the flags to the rope. Participants can write or draw a message or prayer for the well-being and safety of students or others.

Display the prayer flag.

After an incident of gun violence in America, make prayer flags and send them to the Presbyterian Church or Presbytery office nearest the attack, inviting them to hang the flags outside their building as a sign of our mutual grief and support.



See this idea in the Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit on p. 46 at

<https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit/>

## **Worship Resource: A Sample Vigil to Support those who Grieve**

*This vigil worship service was created by Rev. Margery Rossi and has been used to remember and grieve after many incidents of gun violence. Some of these worship resources come from the "God Not Guns" program of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence [www.bradycampaign.org](http://www.bradycampaign.org)*



### **Prayer Vigil To Stand with Victims of Gun Violence**

\_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church

**We grieve with you, \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. Uvalde, Buffalo, El Paso, Dayton).**

May God be with you in your grief,  
that you may know consolation.

May God be with you in your anger,  
that you may receive peace.

May God be with you in your confusion,  
that you may be led to truth.

And may God be with you in your fear,  
that you may be delivered into surpassing love.

**We Grieve...**

#### **Call To Worship**

Leader: Come let us go to the mountain of the LORD,  
that we may walk the path of the Most High.

**People: That we may beat our swords into plowshares,  
and our spears into pruning hooks.**

Leader: We gather today in remembrance of all those killed or harmed by gun violence in \_\_\_\_\_  
*(insert place/s)*

**People: We mourn the loss of over 40,000 of our brothers and sisters,  
killed by guns in our country this year.**

Leader: We are a nation at war with ourselves,  
a people who have forgotten who we are.

**People: We gather today to remember  
that we are each a child of God.**

**We gather to claim our belonging to each other  
and our commitment to living the way of God's peace.**

Leader: Come let us go to the mountain of the LORD,  
that we may walk the path of the Most High.

**People: That we may beat our swords into plowshares,  
and our spears into pruning hooks.**

Leader: Neighbor shall not lift up gun against neighbor.  
Neither shall they learn violence any more.

**All: And none shall be afraid,  
for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.**

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God,  
Inspire us with the gift of shalom,  
the gift of wholeness and the promise of your presence.  
Give us wisdom to seek nonviolence  
as an answer to the violence of our lives and world.  
Give us courage to seek wholeness in a fractured and divided world,  
to find reconciliation rather than revenge,  
to abandon the instruments of violence and death  
and entrust our lives, our homes and our families to you.  
May your presence fill us and others with the thirst for unity,  
wholeness, and the desire to see all people valued  
as created in your image.  
May we and others receive your Shalom  
that we might be faithful instruments of your love. Amen.

(Adapted from Episcopal Peace Fellowship, "Gift of Shalom")

**Hymn: God of Mercy**      *A Hymn Lamenting Gun Violence*

### **Scripture Reading**

#### **Psalm 46**

God is our refuge and our strength,  
who from of old has helped us in our distress.  
Therefore we fear nothing –  
even if the earth should open up in front of us  
and mountains plunge into the depths of the sea,  
even if the earth's waters rage and foam  
and the mountains tumble with its heaving.

There's a river whose streams gladden the city of God,  
the holy dwelling of the Most High.  
God is in its midst, it will never fall –  
God will help it at daybreak.  
Though nations are in turmoil and empires crumble,  
God's voice resounds, and it melts the earth.

The God of Hosts is with us –  
our stronghold is the God of Israel!

Come, see what Yahweh has done –  
God makes the earth bounteous!  
God has put an end to war,  
from one end of the earth to the other,  
breaking bows, splintering spears,  
and setting chariots on fire.  
“Be still, and know that I am God!  
I will be exalted among the nations;  
I will be exalted upon the earth.”

The God of Hosts is with us –  
our stronghold is the God of Israel!

### **Hymn: Amazing Grace**

### **We Remember...**

#### **Time of Reflection and Remembrance**

*During this time, you may offer a brief reflection or remembrance.*

#### **Litany of Remembrance**

Leader 1: Let us remember all who have been harmed by violence.

We acknowledge the strength of those who survived  
and of those still struggling to heal.

For their sake and for ours, we commit ourselves  
to building each other up and to healing – together.

*Leader 2: Let us remember the families and loved ones  
of those who have died from gun violence.*

*We acknowledge their pain and their deep grief.*

*They too, are part of our community,  
and need our love and help towards healing.*

Leader 3: Let us remember the perpetrators,  
and the families of those who commit violence.

We acknowledge that their lives, too, are devastated  
and their hopes dashed.

For their sake and for ours, we remember  
that pain goes in many directions from each act of violence.

**All: We will stand up to violence.**

**We stand together expressing our unity,  
our connection to each other and to the divine;  
our hope for healing and for transformation.**

**Let the Spirit of our Creator move through us.**

**Help us to transform and heal our communities.**

**And let us begin by transforming ourselves. Amen.**

*(Written for Vigils Against Violence by Pat Long and Vandy Bradow)*

### **We Hope...**

**Scripture Reading**  
**Matthew 5:1-12**



When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them. He said:  
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **We Pray...**

#### **Closing Prayer**

Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds.  
Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.  
Let us be aware of the source of being, common to us all and to all living things.  
Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion – towards ourselves and towards all living beings.  
Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other. With humility, with awareness of the existence of life, and of the sufferings that are going on around us, let us practice the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth.



-- *Thich N'hat Hanh*

### **Hymn: The Canticle of the Turning**

#### **We Act...**

Write a message on a prayer flag,\*  
soon to be sent to the people of \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Sign letters to our legislators.  
Join us as we mobilize in response to God's call.  
*See the following action suggestions:*

# Action Suggestions A Kairos Moment for Change

On what else do over 90% of Americans agree? Nonetheless, passing reasonable steps to prevent gun violence is difficult and will require American citizens to take sustained action in face of unrelenting opposition by the gun lobby/NRA. As former Rep. Gabby Giffords put it before the US Congress: **“Stopping gun violence takes courage, the courage to do what’s right, the courage of new ideas. Now is the time to come together, be responsible — Democrats, Republicans, everyone. We must never stop fighting. Fight, fight, fight. Be bold, be courageous. The nation’s counting on you.**

## 1. Find Local Actions Near You: [www.everytown.org/act](http://www.everytown.org/act)

Everytown for Gun Safety is the national organization that sponsors Students Demand Action and Moms Demand Action, with chapters in all 50 states. To be contacted by someone from Moms Demand Action for how to take action text **"READY"** to **644-33**

**2. Memorial for the Lost** – This idea involves a public display of personal items that symbolize gun victims, such as pairs of shoes for each victim or a t-shirt with names of victims. You can do this for a single incident or for all victims in your city/state over a period of time. Contact your local media and officials.



**3. Learn about Gun Violence Proposals** coming to the PCUSA General Assembly in June/July 2022. Share them with your presbytery’s GA commissioners. See \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Learn about the new Guns to Gardens** movement, a form of direct action to show that the American people are ready for change and that we will take the initiative to start it by turning unwanted guns into garden tools. See [www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence)



## 5. **HR 8 The Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019** –

This is the legislation that basketball Coach Steve Kerr called for in his press conference hours after the Uvalde, Texas shooting. It passed the US House of Representatives and has been stalled by lack of US Senate action. It calls for Background Checks on all gun sales, including gun shows and on-line. Reach out to your Senators to call for action now on HR 8 and other reasonable steps to prevent gun violence.

Do a special Offering of Letters Service to support Background Checks or incorporate letters/postcards into other worship and action. See the Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit for a worship service that includes letters to your elected officials as an act of faithfulness.

[www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit)

## 8. **Use Social Media**

Use Social Media to call out our officials and urge them to get background checks passed. In addition to letters, cards, visits and phone calls, here are some sample tweets, Instagram and Facebook posts. Feel free to make them your own. Also, these work best with personal pictures.

Samples: I'm a resident of \_\_\_\_\_ (district/state) and I want this Congress to take action on gun violence in America! I just told my Senator rep to update [#UpdateBackgroundChecks](https://twitter.com/UpdateBackgroundChecks).

JOIN ME by clicking this link <https://every.tw/2AyeAYC> @Everytown

It's past time for Congress to #UpdateBackgroundChecks! I just sent my rep an email urging them to support legislation that would strengthen background checks on gun sales. You can too by using this link <https://every.tw/2AyeAYC> @MomsDemand @Everytown

**8. E-News** -- Learn what other congregations are doing in the monthly Peace Fellowship Gun Violence Prevention E-news. To subscribe, download the free Congregational Toolkit at [www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence/congregational-toolkit) or contact [janoh4@aol.com](mailto:janoh4@aol.com)