

Will your Session Vote on this Overture for GA? If so, contact info@presbypeacefellowship.org

On Praying for a Movement of the Spirit to Engage Presbyterian Congregations in Nation-Wide Action to Prevent Gun Violence

The Presbytery (or Synod) of _____ overtures the 223rd General Assembly to:

1. Confess that, in spite of 50 years of Presbyterian advocacy to reduce gun violence, we have been paralyzed by fear of the gun and ammunition lobby and our church has not adequately applied the power of God's love to the issue of gun violence, with over 1,600,000 Americans dying from guns since 1968 and many millions more wounded, orphaned and devastated by gun violence.

2. Commend

--All prior General Assemblies which have created church social witness policy for steps such as universal background checks, greater gun safety and a ban on assault weapons.

--Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for their creation of the films "Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence" and "Tapestry: Reweaving the Fabric of Community after Public Violence" and the book *Recovering from Un-Natural Disasters*, as well as for their faithful presence, on behalf of the PCUSA, with communities impacted by mass shootings;

--The Office of Public Witness, Office of the Stated Clerk, the Office of the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, the Peacemaking Program, Self-Development of People, Presbyterian News Service, the Presbyterian Collegiate Ministry Network and other agencies of the church for their witness during 50 years of Presbyterian policy for sensible steps to reduce gun violence;

--Those congregations, colleges, camps and office facilities in the Presbyterian family which have voted to post signs on their buildings similar to the "No Guns in God's House" signage called for by the 221st (2014) General Assembly as a witness against the proliferation of guns in our society, and all other congregations that have studied, prayed and acted on this issue in other ways;

--All pastors who include the mission of reducing gun violence in creating liturgies and in their preaching, and all Christian educators who offer gun violence prevention resources for study groups and libraries.

--The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship for its creation of the *Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit* and other resources for local Presbyterian congregations on this issue;

3. Call upon God to wake us up from seeing gun violence as normal and to grant divine courage to our more than 10,000 churches that we might foster a nation-wide conversation on gun violence in every community; specifically, to stand in prayer during the 223rd General Assembly, to share this overture, rationale and prayer with the presbyteries and synods, to share it in any other way possible and to encourage every General Assembly commissioner and observer to continue to pray when they go home for a movement of the Spirit to engage our churches in study and action to prevent gun violence. May every congregation know that the whole church has prayed for them and for God's intervention through them in the face of a gun violence epidemic. In love, may our churches help our country enact sensible steps to prevent gun violence from murders, suicides, accidents, family disputes and mass shootings.

4. Suggested Prayer:

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 commend and give thanks for the long witness of the General Assembly and all Presbyterians who are already engaged in preventing gun violence. 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 way to study, prayer and action at the local community level.*

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 sorrow and tragedy. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.