



# ... BRIEFLY

## Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Gun Violence Prevention Issue

Vol. 69 Spring 2013

[www.presbypeacefellowship.org](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org) [ppfwitness@gmail.com](mailto:ppfwitness@gmail.com)

Trusting the Nonviolence of Jesus Christ Today

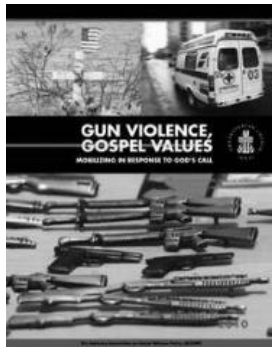
### Preventing Gun Violence Building a Movement for Change

On April 17, 54 US Senators supported the first legislation to reform gun laws in nearly 20 years. They spoke for 90% of the public, including 74% of National Rifle Association members, who supported expanding background checks on gun sales. The vote fell short of the 60 votes required by Republican leaders to pass.

In the four months since the shooting in Newtown, CT aroused the conscience of the nation, five states have already enacted stronger efforts to prevent gun violence—CO, CT, MD, NJ, NY.

A long-term movement is needed. The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship joins PC(USA) General Assembly statements to support responsible state and federal steps to reduce gun violence, including:

- Require universal background checks for gun sales.
- Renew the federal ban on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines
- Make straw purchases/gun trafficking a federal crime



Order GA Action, "Gun Violence & Gospel Values"  
[www.store.pcusa.org/](http://www.store.pcusa.org/)  
2405211002

As with any grassroots movement, many ideas are beginning to sprout. The City of Los Angeles is divesting pension funds from assault weapons makers. Teenagers of Newtown, CT created a "Check Yourself" campaign, penning green checkmarks on their hands in support for background checks. Brewery heir Adolphus Busch IV resigned his lifetime NRA membership, saying, "The NRA appears to have evolved into a lobby for gun and ammunition manufacturers rather than gun owners."

From city workers in LA to the youth of a battered town to a prominent gun owner, America is waking up. Will you be part of this historic effort? Let us know at:

[gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org)

### Learn More on Preventing Gun Violence:

[www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence](http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/gun-violence)  
[www.presbyterianmission.org/gunviolence/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/gunviolence/)  
Coalition to Stop Gun Violence [www.csgv.org](http://www.csgv.org)  
Newtown Action Alliance [www.newtownaction.org](http://www.newtownaction.org)  
The Brady Campaign [www.bradiycampaign.org](http://www.bradiycampaign.org)  
Mayors Against Illegal Guns  
[www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org](http://www.mayorsagainstillegalguns.org)  
Americans for Responsible Solutions  
[www.americansforresponsiblesolutions.org/](http://www.americansforresponsiblesolutions.org/)  
The International Association of Chiefs of Police  
[www.theiacp.org](http://www.theiacp.org) See "Taking a Stand: Reducing Gun Violence"  
National Rifle Association [www.nra.org](http://www.nra.org) & [nraila.org](http://nraila.org)

### Peace Discernment –It's not Too Late!

Since Sept. Presbyterians have engaged in the church-wide Peace Discernment Process, with reports due by the end of May 2013. The process considers whether the PC(USA) is called to affirm nonviolence as its witness in the world. If your church or presbytery has participated, please send your comments **ASAP** to [Carl.Horton@pcusa.org](mailto:Carl.Horton@pcusa.org) or 800-728-7228 x 5200

If you still wish to participate, it's not too late! Organize one four-hour session or two two-hour sessions at your church, presbytery or school now. Everything you need can be easily downloaded at [www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment](http://www.pcusa.org/peace-discernment)

PPF will continue to support the discernment process through the summer for any groups who wish to report late. To get a quick kick-start, contact PPF Discernment Coordinator Dylan Rooke at 724-561-8970 or [dylan@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:dylan@presbypeacefellowship.org) Both for those who will not be attending the 2014 GA and for those who will, this is your chance to reflect on God's call to the church on the issues of violence and war. The 2014 GA will receive a report on the reflections and will act on the next steps toward a decision on nonviolence in 2016. Participate as if the future depends on it. Call Dylan today.

## From the Editor

Dear Friends,

As PPFer Jim Atwood travels from West Virginia to Ohio to North Carolina to Texas to Missouri and more to call for action to reduce gun violence, he took time to tell me this:

“During the Senate action, I have never seen such ‘holy rage’ and determination among ordinary people. We have to remember that movements don’t start with victory. They start with defeat. We’ve never had a real movement for responsible gun laws in America before. We’ve got a movement now.”

That’s what this issue of Briefly is all about –the tools to help you reach out in your local community to build a successful movement for responsible gun laws. You’ll see what some churches are doing and find a study guide for small groups to start the conversation. If you take steps here—or have ideas or suggestions or need help on your preventing gun violence ministry, please communicate with our Preventing Gun Violence team at [gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org) or at the address and phone numbers below.

Taking responsibility for life and for peacemaking is what PPF is all about, today and for the future. With the improved economy, PPF is re-launching its Endowment Campaign. Our goal is at least \$500,000 and significant planned gifts by the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PPF in 2014. Plans include an “Occupation-Free Fund” option and more. Stay tuned! Stay awake!

---Jan Orr-Harter, Co-Editor, Aledo, TX

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## A Peacemaker’s Calendar

**May 2013** Peace Discernment Reports due. [See p. 1](#)

**Now – June 30** Apply now for a visit from a PC(USA) International Peacemaker Sept. 27- Oct. 21. Call Dayna Oliver 800-728-7228 x 8700

**June 24-31** Ghost Ranch Seminar “Peace in the Midst of Conflict: Learning the Skills of Conflict Intervention” with PPFers Bob and Alice Evans [www.ghostranch.org](http://www.ghostranch.org)

**Aug. 1-3** Big Tent Gathering. See [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)

**Sept. 19-21** PPF National Committee Annual Meeting at Stony Point Center, NY. Open to all PPF members. Contact [MaryAnn@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:MaryAnn@presbypeacefellowship.org) for info.

**Oct. 6, 2013** Peacemaking Offering. Materials at [www.pcusa.org/ministries/specialofferings](http://www.pcusa.org/ministries/specialofferings)

**Oct. 24-28, 2013**

Colombia  
Accompaniment  
Training.  
Churches in  
Colombia have  
endured over 50  
years of violence  
in their beautiful  
country. Can you

give a month to act as an international accompanier to provide a measure of safety—international eyes—for their work? Above, see PPF Accompanier Whitney Palmer with new friends in Uraba, Colombia. Contact Linda Eastwood [colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:colombia@presbypeacefellowship.org).



**Nov. 22-24** SOA Vigil, Ft. Benning, GA. [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)

**Dec. 14, 2013** One year since Newtown, CT murders

**Jan. 3-17, 2014** PPF  
Young Adult Delegation  
to Israel-Palestine.  
Scholarships available.  
See p. 3.

**March 13-17, 2014**

Colombia  
Accompaniment Training at Stony Point, NY. **A)** Join us for the training for going to Colombia as an Accompanier –OR– **B)** Reach out to recruit others who can do this ministry. Spanish most helpful but not required. Talk about it with Linda Eastwood at 216-502-5434. Above, Accompanier Bette Cowan



**April 28-May 10, 2014** Presbyterian Peacemaking Program Conference in Israel/Palestine. Apply at [www.pcusa.org/mosaicofpeace](http://www.pcusa.org/mosaicofpeace)

**June 14-21, 2014** General Assembly, Detroit, MI. Plan to come for PPF’s 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party at GA.

**Dec. 31, 2014** PPF Endowment Campaign Completion

Dear Friends,

Like you, I am outraged at the failure of the US Senate to respond in any meaningful way to the pain of a nation wracked by gun deaths. And also like you, I believe that change is possible and that we cannot give up.

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship now joins with a vast groundswell of Americans in going back to our churches, our schools, our communities. It is there, in changing minds and hearts, that this struggle with the principalities and powers will find its turning point toward life and toward sensible gun laws that put the well-being of six-year-olds over the well-being of the gun industry. I believe that many Senators will be ashamed of their actions today.

I want to express a special word of thanks to PPFer Jim Atwood who has kept the feet of the church and PPF to the fire of preventing gun violence. Jim, thank you for your tireless leadership and for being our "spiritual alarm clock."

So we hunker down and get to work again to change more minds and more votes. PPF needs your help for this work--- your help as an activist, as a mentor to others and as a financial supporter of our work. Please use the enclosed reply slip to send a check to PPF that responds to the cowards in the US Senate with a deeper commitment to nonviolence and to preventing gun deaths than ever before. I will if you will.

In Christ, Rick Ufford-Chase, Executive Director

## Nonviolence News

**Israel-Palestine Boycott 101** To implement the boycott called for by the last General Assembly on Israeli products made in or with natural resources from the Occupied Territories, the Israel Palestine Mission Network has created "Boycott 101," a packet with print outs on products to boycott. See [www.ipmn.org](http://www.ipmn.org)

## Israel-Palestine PPF Young Adult Delegation - Jan. 3-17, 2014

### Applications due June 1, 2013

Have you ever expressed an interest in visiting the Holy Land? Have you heard about the conflict in Israel and Palestine and want to learn more? Are you familiar with the situation but want to see it for yourself? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this trip is for you. PPF seeks young adults with a passion for justice and peace to participate in this delegation. We need you to come home with a commitment to serve as ambassadors for justice at the June 14-21, 2014 General Assembly in Detroit and to advocate for the end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and control of the Gaza Strip and for security for both Palestine and Israel.

This is an opportunity to experience realities of life in the Holy Land --the occupations, settlements and peace efforts -- by meeting with those living there, including some of the almost 250 Israeli and Palestinian peace groups. We will visit holy sites in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and the Galilee. PPF has been blessed with a grant to help young adults participate in the trip and in the 2014 General Assembly by subsidizing expenses. Applications are due June 1, 2013. Contact Kelly Baker at [kellymbaker83@gmail.com](mailto:kellymbaker83@gmail.com) and see more info at [presbypeacefellowship.org/middleeastwitness](http://presbypeacefellowship.org/middleeastwitness)

**Close the SOA-** Efforts to close the School of the Americas turned to Washington on April 8-10 when SOA activists visited legislative offices to call for closure of the "School of the Assassins." As Congressional staff left after work, activists held "die-ins" in front of the capitol to remind staffers of the thousands killed by SOA graduates.

For crossing the barb wire fence at the front gate of Fort Benning at last November's vigil, Americus, GA carpenter "Nashua" Chantal has been sentenced to six months in federal prison. You may be able to write to him at this address: Robert Chantal # 5340 Lee County Sheriff's Jail PO Box 2407 Opelika, AL 36804

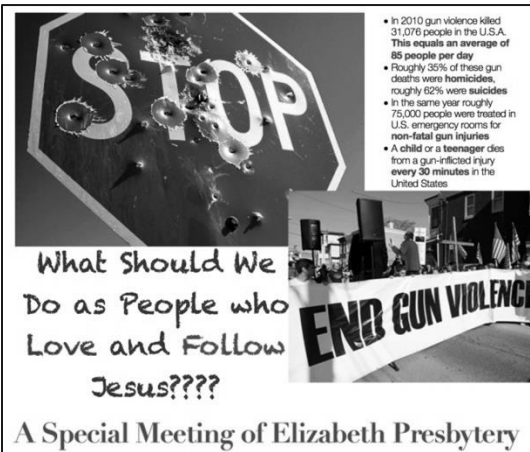
**Nuclear Test Ban Treaty-** In March, the top US arms negotiator, Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller, stated that Pres. Obama plans to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty for a Senate vote before the end of his term with a vigorous advocacy effort. Signed by Pres. Clinton in 1996 and failing to pass in 1999, the treaty stands in a different world context now with the nuclear crises in Iran and North Korea prompting the US to take a lead again in denuclearization. President Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz, recently urged ratification, saying that testing has advanced. "There is a network that has been built up now," said Shultz, "and it has been demonstrated that we can detect all, even small tests."

**PPF welcomes Sarah Prager as our new Web Content Manager. Thank you to Matt Black who kept our web presence top-notch these last years. Welcome, Sarah. Thanks, Matt!**

# Gun Violence Prevention *Case Study* Elizabeth Presbytery

The Peacemaking Committee of Elizabeth Presbytery in central New Jersey had dwindled to about two members. Well, exactly two members. Then Newtown, CT happened.

One of the two members was Shannan Vance-Ocampo, mother of a school-age daughter, pastor of Watchung Ave. Presbyterian Church in North Plainfield and a member of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. Shannan had just been elected Vice-Moderator of the Presbytery. "I thought that preventing violence like Newtown should be the business of the church," she says. So at a January 2013 meeting, she suggested a special called meeting of Elizabeth Presbytery to discuss the issue of gun violence. The meeting was called, with the only stipulation that the program not be politicized. The date was set for Palm Sunday afternoon. "As far as I know," says Shannan, "Elizabeth was the first presbytery to ever have a special called meeting on gun violence---and certainly on Palm Sunday."



At left, is the flier inviting delegates and other church members to the meeting. On a Palm Sunday afternoon in New Jersey, 85 people showed up from 16 congregations. The program began and ended with singing hymns by PPFer Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (see page 8) and everyone viewed the TV documentary "**Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence**," created by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. (See p. 5)

"**Trigger** is amazing," says Shannan, "because it shows the ripple effect that each act of gun violence has on so many people. When it was over, people didn't move. They didn't talk." Rick Ufford-Chase, PPF Executive Director and Moderator of the 216<sup>th</sup> PC(USA) General Assembly, had been invited to lead a discussion. Sitting at round tables, everyone had a chance to discuss gun violence and to listen to others. Rick posed these 6 questions to guide each round-table discussion:

1. What affected you in the movie?
2. When you think about gun violence and how you could respond to it, what is your scriptural grounding? What scripture verses come to mind?
3. The film views gun violence as a public health crisis. What are your responses to viewing gun violence as a public health crisis?
4. What do you think the role of the church should be?
5. What do you think we should do next as a presbytery?
6. Are you willing to serve on a Gun Violence Action Team of the presbytery?

Every church received a notebook prepared by the presbytery office with these resources:

1. Fact Sheet on Gun Violence by Bryan Miller, Director of CeaseFire New Jersey
2. PC(USA) policy on Gun Violence
3. Info on the current denominational Peace Discernment Process. (See p. 1)
4. Info on study-action resources from The Thoughtful Christian and on the Gun Violence Prevention Toolkit created for churches by the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (See p. 5).

"We also had Jim Atwood's wonderful book for sale, *America and its Guns*," (See p. 6-7) said Shannan. "Ten people are now on the team to plan the presbytery's next steps, including a young police detective who seemed very moved by the experience." At the end, Shannan greeted each person at the church door, including an older man. "He and I



had never visited much before," she says. "He gave me a big hug and was very emotional. He told me that he was a retired doctor and that when he was in his 20s just starting out, two small children were playing with a gun. One killed the other. 'I had to identify the body,' he said, 'and then go and tell the mother that her child was dead. Thank you for having this event today. It helped me.'" Shannan reflects that "I don't think he had ever spoken about this trauma before."

**Step One to Prevent Gun Violence:**  
Start the Conversation in Your Community.  
For more info, see [www.wapc.net](http://www.wapc.net)

# Next Steps -- Action to Prevent Gun Violence

## 1. Get the local conversation started between Americans across partisan lines. Resources:

---"Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence," Produced by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the film shares the story of how gun violence impacts individuals and communities and examines the "ripple effect" that one shooting has on a survivor, a family, a community and a society. Shown on many NBC stations as a part of the "Horizons of the Spirit" series, "Trigger" is a good starting point. The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program offers a four session study guide for "Trigger" at [www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/trigger](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/trigger) Order the DVD, \$19.99 at [www.pcusa.org/trigger](http://www.pcusa.org/trigger) or 800-524-2612. Arrives in about 2 weeks.



---**Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit**, free downloadable resource from Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. Includes "Gun Violence 101," info on domestic gun violence, illegal sales/"straw purchases," the relation between guns and suicide and resources for supporting those who grieve. See [presbypeacefellowship.org](http://presbypeacefellowship.org)

---"**The Thoughtful Christian**" offers two one-session studies, one for adults (Gun Control: Beyond the Myths by Jim Atwood #TC0057) and one for youth (Preventing Gun Violence by David Maxwell # TC5095). According to The Thoughtful Christian, "The answer to gun violence is not a simple one, and it's important to separate fact from fiction in the gun control debate." Both studies explore today's gun debate and the myths about gun control and gun violence, along with the factual evidence. The studies can be downloaded for \$7.50 each at [thethoughtfulchristian.com](http://thethoughtfulchristian.com) or call 800-554-4694

## 2. Find Actions that work in your own community. Samples of current church actions:

---**Heeding God's Call** in PA and MD is an interfaith coalition of local congregations who got tired of burying gun victims in their communities. They learned that most of the guns used in crime come from a recurring number of gun stores that regularly look the other way to allow illegal "straw buys" ---someone buying guns for someone else who could not legally buy them in PA or MD, such as a felon. Twice a month, Heeding God's Call holds a highly visible vigil outside a gun store known for illegal sales to encourage them to sign the Gun Sellers' "Code of Conduct." The Code has 10 steps that gun sellers pledge to take to prevent gun violence, including waiting for the results of background checks, accepting only valid IDs, videotaping gun sales transactions, background checks on employees and locking gun showcases. The Code of Conduct was first signed by Walmart, the nation's largest gun seller, as an agreement with the organization Mayors Against Illegal Guns. See [heedinggodscall.org](http://heedinggodscall.org) or [mayorsagainstillegalguns.org](http://mayorsagainstillegalguns.org)



---**The Tee Shirt Project** On Sat. Jan. 19, 2013 about 60 community members gathered at the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill, PA to construct and 'plant' 331 crosses on the front lawn of the church which borders busy Germantown Ave. Each cross is draped with a tee shirt and represents one homicide in Philadelphia in 2012. Many of these murders were committed with illegal guns. This powerful act was covered by local news stations and caused both traffic and pedestrians to stop and stare. On Sun. Jan. 20, Rev. Cindy Jarvis led her congregation out to this symbolic graveyard for the Sunday benediction. A large sign implored Mayor Nutter to act against gun violence.

Maryland Community News



---**Community Forums** – Saint Mark Presbyterian Church in Rockville, MD joined with Beth El Synagogue in Feb. 2013 to host a forum on gun violence reduction that focused on the state guns laws in Maryland. The 150 participants included law enforcement, school officials, mental health professionals and elected officials. Maryland has now banned the sale of assault weapons and large ammunition clips, as well as added

fingerprinting as part of the gun sale process.

---**Event Series** - Ecumenical groups in Kansas City, MO have planned a series of events, starting Thurs. June 13 when the Kansas City Public Library will sponsor a Library Talk by Jim Atwood, author of *America & Its Guns* (see p 6-7). On Fri. June 14 a candlelight vigil will commemorate the 6 month anniversary of the Newtown, CT shootings. Other events will include Atwood leading a Sunday school class and preaching at Second Presbyterian Church on Sun. June 16, Fathers' Day. To attend or for info, contact Laura Sloan at [lauracsloan@gmail.com](mailto:lauracsloan@gmail.com) or 816-550-6154

Contact PPF's Gun Violence Prevention team with ideas or for help at [gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:gvp@presbypeacefellowship.org)

# America and Its Guns: A Theological Exposé

by James Atwood, Cascade Books, 2012

Jim Atwood is a retired Presbyterian pastor, a husband, father, grandfather, hunter and outdoorsman. He has participated in the work for responsible and safe gun laws for almost four decades and serves on the board of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and on the National Committee of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. This book will appeal to church and community study groups because it applies wisdom and life experience to multiple aspects of the gun death crisis in America—the statistics, the laws, the players, the options, as well as the underlying spiritual imperatives of what is often considered to be a “hands-off” political issue. Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) in print and Kindle or with the publisher’s group discounts from [WipfandStock.com](http://WipfandStock.com) or 541-344-1528

Suggestions: The group convener can be one person or can be rotated. The convener’s role is to start and end the meeting, to ask the suggested questions, to move discussion forward and to make sure that everyone in the group is heard fairly. Each session opens with a question for each person to answer. Thereafter, just take turns. Everyone may not wish to address every question. Ideal sessions will be about 90 minutes each. .Group size can be 4-12 persons. If larger, divide into two groups. Suggested group field trip: a gun show occurring in your community.

## 1. Session One – A Call to Conversation Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (read beforehand)

Convener welcomes everyone, opens with prayer and invites each person to introduce themselves by answering:

1. How do you feel about entering into a discussion about gun violence? Have guns impacted your life, family, friends?
2. On p. 14 Atwood writes that “Gun violence is no more a political issue than drunk driving, selling crack cocaine or arson.” How do we Americans determine the issues we will discuss and those we will avoid? How does not talking about gun violence impact the “peace, unity and purity of the church?”
3. On p.19 a National Rifle Association (NRA) executive said: “You would get a far better understanding of the NRA if you were approaching us as one of the great religions of the world.” Is there, or has there ever been, something in your life that has served as an idol? Why would an NRA leader make such a statement?
4. On p. 20-21 Atwood lists indications of possible gun idolatry. Do you agree or disagree? Can a person of faith serve two masters—that is, can we claim another ultimate value in addition to loving God and neighbor?
5. Share a passage in these chapters that especially spoke to you—and why?
6. Chapter 4 covers efforts to find common ground to reduce gun violence over 4 decades and asks the question, “Can the church bring gun rights and public safety zealots together in the same space to start an honest conversation?” Is this study group such a conversation? Who needs to be in the same space to discuss this in your community/state?
7. On p. 18 Atwood writes, “What our nation needs is balanced legislation that respects two fundamental constitutional rights: the right to keep and bear arms and the right to enjoy domestic tranquility as one pursues life, liberty and happiness.” Are there other examples in American life of “balanced legislation” or a balanced approach to difficult issues or competing rights?

Convener asks a group member to close the meeting with prayer. Homework: Read chapters 5, 6, 7

## 2. Session Two – Violence Chapters 5, 6, 7

1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: Do you agree with Atwood that violence as entertainment helps us to see gun violence as normal? Do you personally enjoy violence as entertainment? Do others in your family? Why?
2. Chapter 5 discusses children and guns. Make a gun with your thumb and finger and shoot it to kill everyone in the group, saying, “You’re dead!” Did you do this as children? Did/do your children? How does it feel to do it as an adult?
3. Look at the phrases on p. 45-47. Do you hear yourself or your loved ones in these expressions?
4. Atwood states that the violent language of some politicians and talk show hosts has abetted both gun violence and the militia groups who target law enforcement as “foot soldiers of the federal government.” Do you agree or not? Why?
5. See the Appendix on p. 227-228 and update it with: Iraq War Deaths 2003-2009: 4,400 and US gun deaths 2003-2009: 202,500 (p.194). Does anything surprise you in these numbers? Were you aware that gun deaths have been above 30,000 per year for decades? Why is this high level of civilian gun death so peculiarly American?
6. Describe in your own words what is meant by the phrase “redemptive violence,” p. 63-66. Give examples.
7. Did you know that the PC(USA) is in a period of discernment about whether nonviolence should become the witness of the church to the world? Have you participated in the discernment? See more at [pcusa.org/peace-discernment](http://pcusa.org/peace-discernment)
8. If violence is part of our American DNA, what does that suggest to you about gun violence prevention efforts? What does it suggest to you about the purpose of the church in the United States today?

Convener asks a group member to close the meeting with prayer. Homework: Read Chapter 8, 9, 10

### **3. Session Three – The Principalities & Powers Chapters 8, 9, 10**

1. Convener opens by reading Ephesians 6:12 and asks everyone: Each person give one word that describes the “principalities and powers” (King James Version) that Paul addresses.
2. Is the absence of sensible gun laws in America related to the Principalities and Powers? What is relation between these spiritual and earthly powers? Have you ever experienced these powers in relation to guns?
3. With any smart phones, search for images of “Jesus with assault weapon” and share. What is at the root of a human desire to attribute the blessing of guns and violence to God? Does anything in these chapters make you angry?
4. Do you agree that US racial-ethnic diversity is one reason some people feel a need to acquire a gun? (p. 92)
5. Did the marksman and sporting era of the NRA (1871-1976) play a role in your family history? Were you aware of its change of focus since 1977 and the Cincinnati Revolt? Why is the NRA so successful at promoting gun sales?
6. Atwood documents that the oft-repeated “20,000 gun control laws on the books” is untrue. Why does it persist?
7. Have you faced up to a significant fear in your life? Why is fear so powerful? How did faith help you face up to fear? Convener asks someone to read Ephesians 6:10-20. Close with open prayer. Homework: Read Chapters 11, 12, 13

### **4. Session Four – The Impact of Idolatry Chapters 11, 12, 13**

1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: Do you have concerns about guns and the children and youth in your life? Have you done anything about this? Why or why not?
  2. Were you surprised at the high rate of gun violence and deaths among those with concealed carry permits? Were you surprised about the statistics on gun suicide? (p. 111) Does anything else surprise you in these chapters?
  3. Can you describe the sense of identity and power that guns appear to convey? Can you identify with or have you experienced the “prison” of violence in poor urban neighborhoods? What is the connection between guns and identity?
  4. How can we better help veterans who return home transformed by violence? Who else suffers from PTSD?
  5. How do you react to Atwood’s suggestion that the cost of unfettered gun access is a form of human sacrifice— “between 82 and 84 Americans, ten of whom are children and youth under 18, are killed every day by guns?” (p. 128) This book was published months before the Newtown, CT killings. Has Newtown, CT changed you in any way?
  6. Any other items you wish to discuss from the book so far?
- Convener reads Exodus 20:2-3 and asks a member to close with prayer.  
Homework: Read Chapters 14, 15, 16 and the gun sellers’ voluntary “Code of Conduct” at [www.heedinggodscall.org](http://www.heedinggodscall.org)

### **5. Session 5 – Our Gun Laws Today & Our Impact Abroad Chapters 14, 15, 16**

1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: How do you interpret the Second Amendment and its role today?
2. If left unencumbered, what is the NRA’s vision for America? Where are they trying to take us? Are we there yet?
3. In the 50 laws and policies in Chapter 15, do any seem justifiable? Which do you see as most dangerous? Why?
4. Should states continue to have the option to withhold information on mental illness in background checks?
5. Define a “straw purchase.” What steps could change the gun show and gun dealer culture to reduce gun violence?
6. How can the US church best respond to the appeal for help from the Presbyterian Church of Mexico? (p. 181)
7. Do you share Atwood’s vision for *moving the mountain of gun violence*, listed at the end of p. 168? Why or why not? Convener asks everyone for a word to describe where they are now with the issue of gun violence, closing with prayer. Homework: Read chapters 17, 18, 19. Find out how many gun shows and licensed gun dealers operate in your state.

### **6. Session 6 – The Spiritual Alarm Clock--Will We Wake Up? Chapters 17, 18, 19**

1. Convener opens with prayer and asks everyone: What did you learn about gun shows and dealers in our state?
2. How have you or others in your community responded to local gun violence or national mass shootings?
3. Why are so many NRA members silent on their support for responsible gun laws and adequate law enforcement?
4. In stopping the Senate compromise on expanding background checks (April 2013), did the gun empire overreach?
5. What in Bob Ricker’s story impresses you? Can you see yourself or anyone you know in his story? (p. 200-202)
6. Share anything in this group study experience that has changed your views on gun violence.
7. What are the risks if your church moved from words to action to support responsible gun laws? Of not doing so?
8. Where, if at all, do you see God in the crisis of gun violence in America? Are there any other issues to discuss?
9. Is this going to be our last meeting or should we do something? Discuss possible next steps and make a plan. Convener thanks all for participating, closes with open prayer and a benediction.

## **2 Hymns on Faith & Gun Violence** --by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Permission Given for Worship Use

### **God, We Have Heard It**

HERZLIEBSTER JESU (11.11.11.5) ("Ah, Holy Jesus")

God, we have heard it, sounding in the silence:  
News of the children lost to this world's violence.  
Children of promise! Then without a warning,  
Loved ones are mourning.

Jesus, you came to bear our human sorrow;  
You came to give us hope for each tomorrow.  
You are our life, Lord God's own love revealing.  
We need your healing!

Heal us from giving weapons any glory;  
Help us, O Prince of Peace, to hear your story;  
Help us resist the evil all around here;  
May love abound here!

By your own Spirit, give your church a clear  
voice;  
In this world's violence, help us make a new  
choice.  
Help us to witness to the joy your peace brings,  
Until your world sings!

Tune: Johann Crueger, 1640 Text: Copyright © 1999  
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[www.carolynshymns.com/](http://www.carolynshymns.com/)

### **God of Mercy, You Have Shown Us**

BEACH SPRING (8.7.8.7 D) ("God Whose Giving Knows No Ending")

God of mercy, you have shown us ways of living that are good:  
Work for justice, treasure kindness, humbly journey with the  
Lord.

Yet your people here are grieving, hurt by weapons that  
destroy.

Help us turn to you, believing in your way that brings us joy.

On a street where neighbors gather, shots are heard; a young  
girl dies.

On a campus, students scatter as the violence claims more  
lives.

In a family filled with anger, tempers flare and shots resound.  
God of love, we weep and wonder at the violence all around.

God, we pray for those who suffer when this world seems so  
unfair;

May your church be quick to offer loving comfort, gentle care.  
And we pray: Amid the violence, may we speak your truth, O  
Lord!

Give us strength to break the silence, saying, "This can be no  
more!"

Tune: The Sacred Harp, 1844; attributed to Benjamin Franklin White  
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**Spring 2013 Special Issue  
Preventing Gun Violence**

**Where do we go from here?  
Next Steps, Tools & More**



**“I have heard the cry of my people.”  
Ex. 3:9**