This small group session will take about 1.5-2 hours to complete. Please plan accordingly.

GUN VIOLENCE

OPENING PRAYER

God, our streets run red from violence. Hear our prayer.
God, our sisters and brothers war against each other out of fear. Where can hope be found?
Lord, too many... too many injured and dead. What can we do?
Lord, my heart is heavy but my actions are few. God, forgive me.
God, we hear your call to have our hearts broken for your beloved.
God, we feel your presence pushing us forward with hope into the midst of fear.
God, we are open to where you would lead us and surrender our fears so that your healing work can be done in this community.
God, call on me to respond. O, Lord, here I am.

INDIVIDUAL WARM-UP

Take time to reflect on gun violence in your community and in our nation:

1. List recent incidents of gun violence in your community.
   a. What was your emotional and spiritual response?
   b. What actions did you take?

2. List recent incidents of gun violence in our nation.
   a. What was your emotional and spiritual response?
   b. What actions did you take?

Often, there is division over the phrase “Guns don’t kill people, people kill people”.

1. If you are a gun owner: What influenced your purchase of a gun, what training have you had, and what does it mean to you that you own and can use a gun?

2. If you are not a gun owner: What influenced your decision to not purchase a gun, what are your assumptions about those who do not own a gun, and what does it mean to you that some people own and can use a gun?

GROUP WARM-UP

Together review the RESPECTful Guidelines and Mutual Invitation process and recommit to your small group covenant.

Discuss the following questions:

1. In our community- what is the role and significance of owning or using guns?

2. How do our actions and inactions contribute or challenge the violence in our community?
**GROUNDED IN SCRIPTURE**

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

*God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*

Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

*The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

— Psalm 46:1-11 (CEV)

**DISCUSS AS A GROUP**

What stands out to you in this scripture? Why

**WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?**

“Jesus’ call to his followers to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9) is tied to intimate relationship with God, and echoes God’s dreams for peace for all of creation as expressed in Micah 4:1-4 (NRSV).

Micah’s prophetic dream points to a time when all people will journey to God’s presence so God “may teach us God’s ways and that we may walk in his paths” (4:2). Micah describes God as the final judge and the nations will travel to God’s presence out of their desire to live in peace without violence and bloodshed.

The stunning imagery of Micah’s dream is the transformation of weapons into instruments of harvesting food that occurs after the judgements are handed down to the nations. The transformation is not complete until the nations participate in their own transformation. The work that went into creating the weapons will be matched by the human effort it will take to transform those weapons into peaceful instruments. God does not collect or hide the weapons from the nations, nor does God transform the weapons outside of human effort. The text states that the nations themselves, “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks…

Gun violence has become an all-too-often frightening phenomenon. We need the reality of Micah’s vision more than ever.”

— Book of Resolutions PP3428

**DISCUSS AS A GROUP**

What stands out to you from our UMC doctrine?
WHY WEAR ORANGE

“Orange is the color that Hadiya Pendleton’s friends wore in her honor when she was shot and killed in Chicago at the age of 15—just one week after performing at President Obama’s 2nd inaugural parade in 2013. After her death, they asked us to stand up, speak out, and Wear Orange to raise awareness about gun violence. Since then orange has been the defining color of the gun violence prevention movement… the color orange honors the more than 90 lives cut short and the hundreds more wounded by gun violence daily.”

— From wearorange.org

PRAY TOGETHER...

Creator God, we come to you in grief and confusion. Our minds argue with our hearts, and we are full of doubt that the violence will ever end. We need to know you are with us in this moment… in our communities… and with those affected by gun violence around the world. God, call us to action. Reveal to us the realities of pain and suffering of your children and how we can best respond. God, provide us courage and hope to confront the violence around us. God, let this prayer be the beginning of my journey… our journey… toward healing that which has been broken by gun violence in our communities and beyond. God, help us care. Help us act. Call us to action.

(Adapted from “The Book of Uncommon Prayer” by Steven L. Case, p. 60)

HOW DOES GUN VIOLENCE AFFECT OUR COMMUNITIES?

This session’s videos will feature the stories and testimonies of Ms. Lynda Thacker and the Rev. Peter Matthews whose lives have been deeply and closely affected by gun violence.

IN THIS SESSION YOU WILL HEAR ABOUT...

“Terron’s been shot…I can’t lose him.” Moral responsibility

“Great is your mercy… I see everyday” These are real people, real names, real stories.

“You’re alive… you’re alive.” This love is mindful of the sheer magnitude of the problem but doesn’t cower!

“Calling all God’s people…” Stewards of peace
AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. How has gun violence affected your life and what has been its impact on how you view faith, other people, and the world?

2. God instructs us to not fear, yet often we desire ownership or use of guns personally or professionally as a means of protecting ourselves and our loved ones from that which we fear. As Christians, how does God call us to be in relationship with that which we fear?

3. Rev. Matthews reminds us that we are in a “time for us to pray with our eyes open and our feet moving,” by “crossing lines that separate us” as Christians and communities.” What has separated you from taking action around gun violence, gun control, and the effects of guns in your community and around the globe?
| PRAY | PRAY for and with those affected by gun violence.  
Pray for God to reveal ways that you can be inspired toward action that will eradicate gun violence in your community and across the world. |
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<td>SERVE</td>
<td>Serve your community by providing resources for families affected by gun violence through pastoral care, mental health and medical services, education, collaboration, and safe space.</td>
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| PARTNER | Partner with local & national organizations such as:  
Wear Orange:  
https://wearorange.org/  
Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence  
http://ohioceasefire.org/  
God Before Guns  
http://www.godbeforeguns.org/ |
| LEARN | Learn what the Book of Resolutions says about gun violence:  
http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/gun-violence  
Learn what the UMC says about taking action:  
http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/ways-united-methodists-can-take-a-stand-against-gun-violence |
| LEAD | Lead a 3-week Bible study that focuses on violence in Scriptures:  
| CONNECT | Connect with local organizations to advocate for:  
https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/circles-grace |
| ACT | Contact your representatives and congresspersons to advocate for:  
Universal background checks on all gun purchases, ensuring that all guns are sold through licensed retailers, and establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession.  
Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty.  
Prohibition from purchasing a gun by those convicted of violent crimes, those under restraining order due to the threat of violence, and those with severe mental illness who may be a danger to themselves or others.  
Greater access to services for those suffering with mental illness.  
The ban of magazine weaponry and weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled.  
The promotion of technologies that help law-enforcement agencies trace crime guns and promote public safety. |