

## Report to Church Council: Gun Violence Action Suggestions

In June 2022, following the UM Bishops' Call to Action on gun violence, Church Council agreed to post the Bishops' Call on the SPUMC website/social media sites. Council also asked the Anti-Racism study group to suggest ways St. Paulians could act on the issue of gun violence, such as support legislation or nonprofits.

Since June 2022, the legislative and advocacy landscape has changed, as state and federal governments have responded to the early-summer spate of violent attacks and to the US Supreme Court's ruling invalidating New York's pistol permit process. In particular:

- The **federal Safer Communities Act (June 2022)** enhanced background checks for gun buyers under 21, increased community gun violence prevention efforts, and strengthened some protections to prevent domestic abusers from obtaining firearms.
- In **New York** (and several other states), legislation and executive action tightened some assault weapons controls, strengthened extreme risk laws, and revamped the state pistol permit process to require additional permit steps while eliminating those the Supreme Court found unconstitutional.
- Per Everytown for Gun Safety (9/1/22), in this year's legislative sessions, **state legislatures** passed at least 45 gun safety laws, blocked many attempts to weaken gun laws, and allocated \$860 million to gun violence prevention programs.

Also, in early September, our **United Methodist Bishops issued a new Call to Prayer and Action**, explicitly rejecting "the idolatry of guns and the distorted attachments to our right to own guns without safeguards for the communities of the world," calling the church to prayer and to public witness and advocacy, and specifically supporting, and taking action to pursue, a federal ban on assault weapons. The Bishops' new Call can be found at <https://www.umnews.org/-/media/UMC-Media/2022/09/01/20/35/council-of-bishops-letter-on-gun-violence-2022>.

In light of these changes, the reading group gathered, with Council's blessing, **links to denominational and not-for-profit advocacy groups which are currently pursuing specific legislative and policy initiatives.** (List attached). We would urge St. Paulians to use the links — especially to the UM Board of Church & Society, with its an online petition to ban assault weapons sales — to follow legislative/policy strands of their choice.

In addition to making use of the links, the study group suggests that Council might embrace some or all of the following in-church action possibilities:

- Asking the SPUMC committees/ministry teams to explore actions on violence that relate to their charges
- Facilitating small group conversations about how individuals and their families/friends/colleagues are taking action and sharing action ideas they have
- Using a UM Board of Church & Society (or other—Sojourners?) curriculum for a short-term study/reading/conversation group on gun violence
- Working with other St Paulians on collective policy action...as Tim Lillard et al did in 2016 and/or with UMC General Board of Church and Society, NYS Council of Churches, Area Congregations Together
- Connecting with other faith communities on policy action.

## St. Paul's UMC Gun Violence Action Tip Sheet (9/22)

For action initiatives on gun violence, check out the info and action options on these advocacy sites:

- **The UMC General Board of Church & Society**, <https://www.umcjustice.org>. Urging:
  - Renewal of federal assault weapons ban, S 736 (use online petition to Congress or write your own);
  - Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty;
  - Ensuring all guns are sold through licensed gun retailers;
  - Prohibiting all individuals under restraining order due to threat of violence from purchasing a gun;
  - Prohibiting persons who pose a danger to self and community from purchasing a gun;
  - Ensuring greater access to services for those who have mental illness;
  - Establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession;
  - Banning large capacity magazines and weapons that fire multiple rounds for each trigger pull;
  - Promoting new technologies to aid in tracing crime guns and promoting public safety. ([UM Res. 3428](#))
- **Friends Committee on National Legislation**, [https://fcn.quorum.us/campaign/40259/?utm\\_source=fcnaction](https://fcn.quorum.us/campaign/40259/?utm_source=fcnaction)  
Urging federal funding for violence interrupters programs
- **Giffords**, <https://giffords.org/take-action/> Text campaign for universal background checks. Also offers state by state gun law tracking and analysis.
- **Brady United**, <https://www-bradyunited.org/act/prevent-gun-violence> Email/phone campaign to support federal universal background check legislation (S 529) and ban on assault weapons (S 736). Also offers a 12-point plan to reduce gun violence, gun violence data, other resources.
- **Sandy Hook Promise**, <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org> Online petitions for federal legislation on background checks, extreme risk protection (HR 3480), safe storage (HR 748), and end to assault weapons/magazine sales.
- **March for our Lives (Parkland)**, <https://marchforourlives.com/actions/> Online petitions urging congressional action on universal background checks, support for school counseling.
- **Moms Rising** <https://www.momsrising.org/campaigns/gun-safety> Online petitions for universal background checks on firearms sales, bans on military-grade assault rifles and on high-capacity magazines, extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) .
- **Everytown for Gun Safety**, <https://www.everytown.org> Working on: background checks on all gun sales, extreme risk laws, and a stop to the arming of teachers

**This listing is not exclusive; please suggest others you find helpful. AND/OR send your own messages**, via online contact forms, to US Congressional and NY Legislature representatives:

Senator/Senate Majority Ldr Chuck Schumer, <https://www.schumer.senate.gov/contact/email-chuck>,  
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, <https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/email-me>  
Representative Joe Sempolinski, [https://sempolinski.house.gov/address\\_authentication?form=/contact](https://sempolinski.house.gov/address_authentication?form=/contact);

NY Governor Kathy Hochul, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

NY Assembly Member Anna Kelles, <https://nyassembly.gov/mem/Anna-R-Kelles/contact/>

NY Senator Tom O'Mara, <https://www.nysenate.gov/senators/thomas-f-omara/contact>