

Resolution to Take Action on Gun Violence

Whereas, gun violence continues to be an epidemic in our country, including the recent tragedy of gun violence in our own Conference in Allen, Texas on May 6, 2023, where 8 people were killed and 7 others physically injured, not to count the cost of grief and mental trauma to families and the community; and

whereas, “in an average year, 3,996 people die and 5,556 are wounded by guns in Texas. Texas has the 28th highest rate of gun violence in the US” (Gun deaths: CDC, WONDER, four-year average: 2018–2021); and

whereas, in Texas “the rate of gun deaths increased 46% from 2012 to 2021, compared to a 39% increase nationwide. The rate of gun suicides increased 25% and gun homicides increased 91% compared to a 19% increase and 73% increase nationwide, respectively” (Gun violence trends: CDC, WONDER, 2012–2021); and

whereas, guns are the leading cause of death among children and teens in Texas. In Texas, an average of 430 children and teens die by guns every year, of which 36% of these deaths are suicides and 58% are homicides. (Children and teens gun deaths: CDC, WONDER, four-year average: 2018–2021, ages 0–19; Leading causes of death: CDC, WONDER, 2021, ages 1–19); and

whereas, “states with the strongest gun laws generally have less gun violence,” (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence: Gun Violence Statistics); and

whereas, Texas lawmakers continue to weaken our most basic gun safety laws despite our state suffering some of the deadliest mass shootings in recent years, i.e. giving Texans the right to store firearms in their cars; allowing licensed gun owners the ability to openly carry a handgun in a holster in public; requiring the state’s public universities to allow those licensed to carry a concealed weapon to be able to do so on campus (including in dorms, classroom, and campus buildings); removing the cap on the number of school marshals who can carry a firearm in K-12 schools; clarifying the right of handgun owners to carry their weapon in a church or other place of worship; and, most recently, allowing anyone over the age of 21 who is not prohibited from owning a gun to be able to carry one in public without a permit or training.” (Politico, “Why Texans Can’t Get the Gun Laws They Really Want,” May 27, 2022); and

whereas, Texas is missing key pieces of gun safety law such as universal background checks, gun owner licensing, extreme risk protection orders, most domestic violence gun laws, assault weapon restrictions, large capacity magazine ban, waiting periods, strong concealed carry law, open carry regulations, and community violence intervention funding (Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence: Texas Gun Laws); and

whereas, public polling has long shown that Texans, regardless of political party or gun ownership, favor common-sense gun laws that reduce preventable gun injuries and deaths, i.e. 85% of Texans support a federal law requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers, including private sales and gun shows; 83% support a federal law that bans those convicted of domestic violence from purchasing a gun; 75% support making 21 the minimum age to buy any gun nationwide; and 59% support a nationwide ban on the sale of AR-15 rifles and similar semiautomatic weapons (AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, July28-Aug. 1, 2022); and

whereas, Eugene Stoner, a former Marine and the inventor of the AR-15, never owned one. His family said, “Eugene Stoner, designed the AR-15 and subsequent M-16 as a military weapon to give our soldiers an advantage over the AK-47. We think he would have been horrified and sickened as anyone, if not more by [mass shootings].” (Time Magazine, “AR-15 Inventor's Family: This Was Meant to Be a Military Weapon,” June 16, 2016); and

whereas, “the strength of a political system depends upon the full and willing participation of its citizens. The church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust.” (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*, Social Principles ¶164.B Political Responsibility); and

whereas, thoughts and prayers are not sufficient to address the evil of gun violence; now

Therefore, be it resolved that we support elected leaders who are willing to represent us by taking action on gun violence by engaging in meaningful conversation and working across party affiliations regarding gun safety legislation toward a goal of reducing the gun violence Texans experience. Toward this end, we also support the advocacy work of Texas Impact; and

Be it further resolved that we encourage our churches to engage the Gun Violence Study Materials ([https://ntcumc.org/Gun_Violence_Curriculum\(1\).pdf](https://ntcumc.org/Gun_Violence_Curriculum(1).pdf)), which was created to equip clergy and laity with biblical and theological foundations around the issue of gun violence and to offer opportunities for Wesleyan formation and Christian responses; and

Be it further resolved that United Methodists in North Texas will choose one or more ways to “advocate at the local and national level for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence, including:

- Universal background checks on all gun purchases
- Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty
- Ensuring all guns are sold through licensed gun retailers
- Prohibiting all individuals convicted of violent crimes from purchasing a gun for a fixed time period
- Prohibiting all individuals under restraining order due to threat of violence from purchasing a gun
- Prohibiting persons with serious mental illness, who pose a danger to themselves and their communities, from purchasing a gun
- Ensuring greater access to services for those suffering from mental illness
- Establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession
- Banning large-capacity ammunition magazines and weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled
- Promoting new technologies to aid law-enforcement agencies to trace crime guns and promote public safety.”

(*The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2016*, 3428.8 “Our Call to End Gun Violence”)

Authors:

Rev. Mary Beth Hardesty-Crouch, First UMC Allen
Rev. Josh Esparza, First UMC Allen
Rev. Matt Gaston, First UMC Plano
Rev. Barry Hughes, Suncreek UMC

Rev. David Lessner, Creekwood UMC
Rev. Patrick Littlefield, Suncreek UMC
Rev. Keri Lynn Lucas, Creekwood UMC