

## Preventing Gun Violence

### Approved by the West Virginia Annual Conference 2022

#### WHEREAS:

- Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for children in our nation;
- And, our schools, churches, theaters, concerts, and even grocery stores continue to be the scenes of mass shootings;
- And, high-capacity gun magazines make mass shootings more deadly;
- And, military style rifles are designed to make mass killing more efficient;
- And, eighteen-year-olds, who cannot legally purchase beer or tobacco, can buy a military style rifle with ease.
- And, a majority of citizens, including responsible gun owners, support universal background checks and other gun safety measures;
- And, Congress has not passed any gun safety legislation yet in this century;

**WHEREAS** Jesus expressed specific concern for the welfare of children (Matthew 19:13-14) and wept over a city that did not know “the things that make for peace” (Luke 19:41-42), and;

**WHEREAS** in our baptismal covenant we “*accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves*” and;

**WHEREAS** we continue to face the uniquely American evil of mass shootings, most recently in racially motivated attacks on a shopping center in Buffalo and a Taiwanese church in Los Angeles, and in the attack on the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and;

**WHEREAS** one of the common elements in those events is the use of legally purchased, high-capacity weapons and ammunition, and;

**WHEREAS** majorities in both political parties favor preventing people with mental illnesses from purchasing guns, subjecting private gun sales and gun show sales to background checks, and refusing to permit people to carry concealed firearms without a permit, (<https://www.pewresearch.org/.../key-facts-about.../>) and;

**WHEREAS** the General Conference resolved:\*

For United Methodist congregations to advocate at the local and national level for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence. Some of those measures include:

- Universal background checks on all gun purchases
- Ensuring all guns are sold through licensed gun retailers
- Prohibiting gun purchases for those under restraining order due to threat of violence and those with serious mental illness who pose a danger to themselves and their communities
- Ensuring greater access to services for those with mental illness
- Establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession
- Banning large capacity ammunition magazines and weapons
- Promoting new technologies to aid law-enforcement agencies to trace crime guns and promote public safety

**Therefore be it resolved that:**

- The Justice and Advocacy Ministry Team calls on United Methodists in the West Virginia Annual Conference to:
- Express Christ-shaped compassion for victims of gun violence by including them in personal prayer and corporate worship;
- Engage in biblical and theological reflection on the nature of violence and Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God;
- Support and encourage research on gun violence to aid in the formulation of effective legislation;
- Send this resolution to the governors of Maryland and West Virginia, the state senators, presidents, the state speakers of the house and both congressional delegations.
- Call on our local, state and federal representatives to support reasonable gun safety laws including universal background checks, "red flag" laws, and renewal of the assault weapons ban;
- Boldly proclaim the hope of that day when God's Kingdom will come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven and claim the opportunity to participate in its coming.