

**RESOURCES FOR RAISING AWARENESS:
THE NATIONAL VIGIL FOR ALL VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE
DECEMBER 6 - 17, 2017 (and throughout the year)**

Schedule:

Wednesday December 6 - 5th Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence from 7-9 PM at St. Marks Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C.

Thursday – Sunday, December 14-17: Congregations across the nation participate via prayer, song, vigils and education. December 14th is the actual anniversary of the tragic Newtown shooting

Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 4:15 pm - CFCU will be holding a candlelight vigil for all its member congregations at the intersection of Hampden and South Colorado Blvds.

THEME

The unifying theme for the local vigils and remembrance events being held across the country is #EndGunViolence. In this way, we are reinforcing the fact that gun violence affects people regardless of age, income, location, religion, and race. We encourage you to carry this theme in all your communications, such as banners displayed at the vigil, your web site, social media, posters to announce the vigil, and all communications sent to the press.

***If you have not done so yet, please register your event on this Google form:
<http://bit.ly/2017NationwideVigilRegistration>***

December 14 marks the fifth anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre that was a turning point for so many of us. Our faith calls us -- in fact, commands us -- to stand up to honor with action all these victims and the thousands more lost over the past years. CFCU urges all our member congregations to plan some type of activity within their own faith communities for this anniversary week. **Be sure to register your congregation** at the address above and let Alana alanks@aol.com know if you develop an activity that could help others with their planning.

Our goals for this event are:

- To promote awareness and understanding about gun violence in our nation and state
- To increase the base of support within our congregations for the work of CFCU—and help more congregations get to “Yes” and
- To expand the Rapid Response Teams in our congregations to increase our effectiveness at the Legislature in 2018

RESOURCES FOR PLANNING YOUR CONGREGATIONAL AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Sample prayers, sermons and songs by faith tradition at <http://www.decembersabbath.org/>

Perform a special song at services – view special performance of Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah* by First Universalist as part of the national Concert Across America at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y956raVuIWU> Contact John Bringenberg at john@bringenberg.com for copies of the data slides used in the performance or help with other musical selections.

Sponsor a Speaker

Tom Mauser, who lost his son Daniel at Columbine is available to speak at CFCU congregations. His only requirements are that the audience size is at least 10 and that he can make copies of his book, *Walking in Daniel’s Shoes*, available for sale. Connect with Tom via alanks@aol.com

Show an Educational video with a Facilitated Discussion:

Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence <http://triggerdoc.com/>

Trigger was developed by the Presbyterian Church USA. The documentary is 54 minutes long and examines the ripple effect that one shooting has on a survivor, family, community, and society. It frames gun violence as both a disaster and a public health issue. The DVD costs \$20 and a discussion guide can be purchased for an additional \$5

Making A Killing: Guns, Greed and the NRA View the trailer at

<https://www.bravenewfilms.org/makingakilling> CFCU has a copy to loan - CFCU helped premiere this film in Denver in March. Tells the stories of five families and communities and covers the issues of domestic violence and background checks, suicide and waiting periods, unintentional shootings and safety solutions, mass shootings and online sales, and trafficking and the need for stronger federal laws around gun sales. Film is 1 hour and 45 minutes long, but can be showed in segments. Get your own free copy by contacting Angel at faithorganizer@bravenewfilms.org or alanaks@aol.com to use CFCU's copy.

Armor of Light <http://www.armoroflightfilm.com/> CFCU has a copy to loan

The film follows the journey of an Evangelical minister trying to find the courage to preach about the growing toll of gun violence in America and is best suited for Evangelical Christian congregations. It can be ordered on iTunes for \$7.99. Contact alanaks@aol.com to use CFCU's copy.

Offer a Parent Education Session to Help Save Children's Lives

CFCU's Action SFA has combined their **Ask A Doc** initiative that encourages pediatricians to screen for guns in the home with the **BeSMART** campaign of Mom's Demand Action to offer a parent education session on what parents can do to reduce teen suicides and the number of unintentional shootings that occur when children get ahold of an unsecured firearm. The session includes a video, speakers, handouts and requires at least an hour. Contact Jan McCoy at mccoy@ecentral.com

Candle Lighting Blessing for the 3rd Night of Hanukkah

The fifth anniversary of the Newtown shootings that killed 20 grade school children and six staff on Dec. 14, coincides with the third night of Hanukkah this year. We are asking Jewish congregations to remember the over 30,000 lives taken by gun violence every year in this country and take action by reading this blessing at your candle lighting on the third night.



May the warmth of these lights give comfort to those who've lost loved ones to gun violence; light our way that we might "seek the peace of the city" as the prophet Jeremiah taught, and remind us of how a small, but righteous group can triumph.

Congregational Story Project: Everyone Is Touched by Gun Violence

To increase awareness and expand support within your congregation, consider an activity showing how gun violence has impacted congregational members directly or indirectly. You can showcase deeply personal stories or highlight all the ways that gun violence affects our daily lives by hosting a panel where speakers can tell their stories or mounting a display illustrating ways members of your congregation have been touched by gun violence. Tip Sheet follows:

Everyone Is Touched By Gun Violence: Congregational Stories and Impacts

Gun violence affects our lives in ways beyond the headlines—suicides, domestic violence killings, accidental shootings, school lock-downs, scouting out the safest places to sit at the movies or in your own house of worship...Data can be very persuasive but the stories of real people, especially people we know, are the most powerful. To increase awareness and expand support within your congregation, consider an activity showing how gun violence has impacted congregational members directly or indirectly. You can showcase deeply personal stories or highlight all the ways that gun violence affects our daily lives.

- Host a panel where speakers can tell their stories or
- Mount a display or create a book illustrating ways members of your congregation have been touched by gun violence

TIPS

Set a date for sharing or displaying these stories or ways in which lives have been affected.

If you decide to do a panel, remember that retelling their story can be a very painful experience for those who have lost loved ones or been traumatized by injury and fear, so you should start out with personal outreach. Make an announcement that your group is interested in learning from anyone in the congregation who has been personally impacted by gun violence and provide a contact number. Your clergy may be able to connect you with people. Then someone from your group should sensitively interview the person about their experience and find out if they're comfortable sharing it in public. (See Sample Announcement)

Another approach is to distribute a simple *I've Been Touched by Gun Violence* flier and ask members of your congregation to complete and return it by a specified date, if they are willing to share their experience. Here you're trying to identify the everyday ways in which our lives have been changed by living in a world where the possibility of gun violence is always lurking.

Be sure to publicize where and how these stories can be heard or seen through your bulletin, signage and from the pulpit.

Be sure to let us know what you did, how your project went and what you learned so we can improve upon this activity.

Sample Announcements

Do You Have a Story for Our *Gun Violence Touches Everyone* Story Corps Project?

As a member of Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence, our congregation is participating in the National Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence, marking the 5th anniversary of the Newtown massacre. To raise awareness about how gun violence affects everyone, we are reaching out to learn about the experiences of our congregational members. If you've been personally impacted by gun violence and feel comfortable sharing your story, please contact _____ Your confidentiality will be respected, and you will determine whether and how your story is shared.

Gun Violence Touches Everyone Exhibit

As a member of Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence, our congregation is participating in the National Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence, marking the 5th anniversary of the Newtown massacre. To raise awareness about how gun violence touches everyone, we are

reaching out to learn about the experiences of our congregational members. Please complete this question and return it to _____ for display in our exhibit/ book by (date)

Gun Violence Touches Everyone. Please share how it has affected you:

Remember, the impact of gun violence isn't just the tragedy of having someone shot or injured—it's how we live our lives in its shadow. Do you now spend time figuring out where it's safest to sit at the movie theater or our congregation? Has your child experienced the trauma of a school lock-down? Are you afraid to engage strangers when there's a potential dispute due to the prevalence of concealed weapons? With your help, we hope to map the full ripple effect of gun violence in our community.

Name

How gun violence has affected me or changed the way I live:

Empty Dinner Plate (Developed by CFCU member Eileen McCarron with Park Hill UCC)

Dec. 14 marks the fifth anniversary of the Sandy Hook shootings. One way to remember that tragedy -- and all the others -- is to set an empty plate at your dinner table that night to remember that virtually all gun violence victims leave behind families and friends who loved them and grieve their absence. Attached is a note that can be taped to the empty plate or read aloud as a dinner table prayer.

Top note: On December 14, 2012, a gunman entered Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut and within approximately ten minutes, twenty first graders and six educators lay dead, joining the other 33,537 victims of gun violence for that year.

On December 14th, we will remember these and all victims of gun violence. One way to do this is to set an empty plate at your dinner table to remember that virtually all gun violence victims leave behind families and friends who loved them and grieve their absence.

Note glued to plate: A Prayer of Remembrance

Creator God, as we settle in to nourish our bodies and engage in reflections with family and friends, we are mindful of those gun violence victims who are no longer doing likewise with their own family and friends.

For those loved ones, there is an empty space at their table every day that will never be filled,
Smiles that will never again warm their hearts,
Stories that will never again be related,
and arms that will never again share an embrace.

For the one lost to gun violence, there are dreams never to be fulfilled:
Sports, music, art, graduation, love, career, explorations, children, or grandchildren,
Or the reveling in all the delights this world has to offer.

Grant us wisdom to discern the most effective means to ending this epidemic.
Grant us courage to proceed against strong political winds to effect changes that will save lives.
And on this day, as every day, be a comforter to those whose lives gun violence has upended.