

A LITANY ON THE TRAGEDY OF GUN VIOLENCE
(Written for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2010)

We celebrate and give thanks for the life and witness of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Who proclaimed a vision of all people living together,

And bore witness to the power of nonviolence,

We gather, to remember his words, his commitment, his life

And to rededicate ourselves to addressing the evil of gun violence

which claimed his life and which continues to plague our country and the world.

Some 30,000 Americans die by guns each year in the United States.

And we grieve.

An average of eighty people is killed by guns every day, including eight children.

And our hearts break.

Guns kill some 1,000 people each day in the developing world.

And we mourn.

An American child is twelve times more likely to die by a gun than are the children who live in all twenty-five industrialized nations combined.

And we weep.

The annual economic cost of gun violence in America is estimated to at least \$100 billion. Medical costs, decimated families, the court system, our jails and prisons, and security measures in airports, schools, and public buildings all contribute to this sum.

And sorrow sweeps over us.

Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gun fire within our own country than American servicemen and women who were killed in all our wars of the 20th century.

And we pray.

Faced with gun violence,

We grieve for those are killed and those whose lives are forever changed;

We seek to comfort for those who have lost loved ones;

We pray for a change of heart for those who resort to violence.

Faced with gun violence, may we

Educate;

Organize;

Advocate;

And in all the ways we can, work for that day when

Guns and weapons of destruction

Are transformed into instruments of healing.

May it be so.

May we so do.

- The Rev. W. Mark Koenig
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Presbyterian Peacemaking Program ■ Compassion, Peace and Justice ■ General Assembly Mission
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