



Congregational Resource Toolkit for Engagement with Gun Reform Subcommittee

Coffee Hour HOW TO:

Before:

-Get in touch with your priest about setting up a Sunday where you could host a discussion for parishioners interested in helping to pass stronger gun laws in Massachusetts.

-Once you have scheduled a date, write a blurb to advertise your event. It could look something like this:

“Did you know that in the next few weeks, Massachusetts will be considering a major bill to change the gun laws in our state? Are you curious about what you can do to make sure your voice is heard in that process? Well then join us on Sunday_____ from _____ to learn more about how the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and the B-PEACE for Jorge Anti-Violence Campaign can help us in that work.”

-Participate in a conference call with B-PEACE leaders to walk you through the process of facilitating a discussion about gun reform in your church.

-Take a look through all the materials in your Facilitator’s Toolkit to make sure you are well acquainted with the B-PEACE campaign, the issue of gun violence in our state and our nation, and the legislative process.

-Recruit your friends and peers at your church who may have a special affinity to this issue, and ask them to attend and or/ help execute your event.

-Print out a sufficient number of Commitment Cards (inside the Tool Kit) and a sign-up sheet to pass around at your meeting, and make sure to collect them when you are done. Print out some of the Post Cards included here in case people want to take action immediately.

During:

-Try your best to start on time and respect people’s time by ending on time.

-Create and handout and agenda for your meeting so people know what to expect.

-Respect everyone’s opinions on this subject matter. Answer whatever questions you feel comfortable answering and refer those you do not to Noah Van Niel and the B-PEACE for Jorge Gun Reform Subcommittee (**noah.vanniel@gmail.com**).

-Ask everyone to fill out a Commitment Card (p. 12). If people seem ready, ask them to fill out a Post Card as well (p.13).

-Identify members of the group who seem especially interested and invite them to collaborate in inviting a legislator to the church or to visit the State House.

After:

- Collect all Commitment Cards, Post Cards and Signup Sheets.
- Email Noah Van Niel on the B-PEACE Gun Reform Subcommittee to report on how it went.
- Find a way to share the information you collected with that person and talk about next steps, based upon the responses you received.

On Monday, September 10, 2012, 19 year old Jorge Fuentes was shot and killed while walking his dog in front of his home in Dorchester. Jorge and his family were members of St. Stephens Episcopal Church in the South End of Boston, where Jorge had grown up in the afterschool and summer program for children and young adults. Jorge was a natural leader, an exuberant and remarkable young man adored by the children he mentored and loved and respected by his peers. A sense of grief and outrage reverberated throughout the St. Stephen's community and across the entire Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts in the aftermath of Jorge's senseless killing.

On November 3rd, Bishop Tom Shaw stood before the Diocesan Convention and proclaimed that we as a Church could not sit by and let the death of one of our cherished members pass without a response. Answering this call to action, the convention drafted and passed a resolution establishing a task force in Jorge Fuentes' memory, promising to examine the root causes of violence in the diverse communities of Eastern Massachusetts. The convention charged the task force with investigating methods and models to alleviate the root causes of violence, by consulting with faith communities and social service and government agencies, and with using these findings to develop material and programs for congregational, deanery, and diocesan implementation.

B-PEACE for Jorge has come to fruition as the answer to Bishop Shaw's call for action.

Bishop's actions for peace: **P**rograms for youth, **E**mployment for teens and young adults, **A**cademic excellence in public high schools, **C**ommunities for families, and an **E**nd to gun violence.

Programs for Youth

Through programs like the B-SAFE summer program and Barbara C. Harris Camp, the diocese of Massachusetts is already doing a lot to help at risk youth in the Boston area. The B-PEACE campaign is developing additional ways of better supporting existing youth programs in their efforts to add trauma-informed programming, including implementing the PeaceZONE curriculum in the B-SAFE/B-READY programs and expanding the B-SAFE model to other at-risk neighborhoods across the state.

Employment for Teens and Young Adults

One of the greatest challenges that at-risk youth face is a lack meaningful employment opportunities that will put them on the path to a successful career. This subcommittee is working with Episcopal parishes across the diocese to develop commitments from businesses and business owners that they will offer internships to teens and young adults to give them this valuable experience. We are also looking to partner with the Youth Jobs Coalition to help young people find meaningful employment.

Academic Excellence in public High Schools

This subcommittee is working on developing working partnerships between deaneries and local under-resourced schools. This work will hopefully build on some of the successful school partnerships already

going on across the diocese. Our goal is for each deanery to partner with one school and help provide things like college and career mentoring, tutoring, and other resources specified by the school itself.

Communities for Families

This subcommittee is a collection of professional mental health workers and counselors who are looking for ways they can better connect clergy and lay leaders to training and resources for supporting families dealing with trauma and mental health issues.

End to Gun Violence

This subcommittee is currently engaged with reforming gun laws at both the state and federal level. Following the lead of elected officials in our diocesan community, we will be working to mobilize Episcopalians to call, write or email state representatives, asking them to strengthen gun laws that will help keep guns out of the hands of those who will use them violently.

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts is a key member of the

MASSACHUSETTS COALITION TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

Our organizations share the following LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

Require a background check at the point of sale every time a gun is sold, including private sales, sales at gun shows and over the Internet.

Gun licenses in MA last for six years. If a licensee purchases a gun from a licensed dealer during this 6 year period there is a background check at the point of sale. This supplemental check is not currently required for private sales. The easiest way to address this gap in background checks is to require that all private sales be conducted at a federally licensed dealership where there is access to the federal NICS (National Instant Check System) database. A provision requiring background checks for internet sales has been in effect in CA for many years, and has been successfully enforced. Background checks at gun shows were recently successfully implemented in New York.

Limit HANDGUN sales to one per month in order to deter straw purchasing and make it harder for gun traffickers to acquire multiple guns in a single transaction.

Trafficking is the primary source of crime guns in the city of Boston and other urban areas in MA, and while many of these guns are trafficked from other states, a large share (at least 1/3) originate in MA. A one-handgun-a-month law would prevent traffickers from purchasing large quantities of guns for illegal resale. One handgun a month laws have been successful in other states. When VA implemented such a law, the odds of tracing a gun originally acquired in the Southeast to a VA gun dealer (as opposed to a dealer in a different southeastern state) dropped by 71% for guns recovered in NY, 72% for guns recovered in MA, and 66% for guns recovered in NJ, NY, CT, R I and MA combined. CA, MD, NJ and Washington DC currently have one handgun/month limits in place. Traffickers often use straw purchasers (often women who can pass background checks) to purchase their guns in bulk. Limiting handgun sales to one per month makes it much more difficult for traffickers to acquire the weapons because the straw purchasers are now limited. It also protects the straw purchasers who are sometimes being coerced to buy the guns.

Share records of adjudicated commitments for mental health and substance abuse with the National Instant Check System as required by federal law

States are required under federal law to share records of involuntary commitments to mental health institutions for inclusion in NICS background checks. Massachusetts is sharing information about criminal records and restraining orders, but we have failed to come into compliance regarding records of involuntary adjudicated commitment. Failure to comply has put Massachusetts at risk of losing substantial amounts of federal public safety grant funding, and undermines the effectiveness of the NICS System by allowing prohibited persons to purchase guns.

EXPAND the existing suitability standard that currently applies only to the issuance of a License to Carry to the issuance of FID cards as well.

When considering the issuance of a license to carry MA police chiefs have the discretion to deny a license based on a judgment of suitability, such that they can deny a license to an individual who passes a basic background check if they believe, based on all of the information available to them, that the applicant may nonetheless be a danger to the community or to themselves (ie, instances of domestic violence). However, this same discretion does not apply to the FID card (the license needed to purchase or possess a rifle or shotgun). Under current law police chiefs are required to issue an FID card to an applicant who passes a background check, even if the chief believes the person to be dangerous. The MA Chiefs of Police

Association has called for the expansion of the suitability standard to cover the FID card so that they can keep guns out of the hands of potentially dangerous individuals. We strongly support this change. We also strongly oppose any proposals that would limit existing police chief discretion regarding the License to Carry.

Require law enforcement authorities to attempt to determine, every time a gun is involved in an injury or death, who owned the gun and where the gun came from; to maintain that data in a statewide database, and to share that data with public health researchers, policy makers, other law enforcement agencies and the general public.

The gun lobby has passed laws and restricted funding at the federal level to prevent researchers from obtaining data about guns used in crime or suicide. They have pushed through provisions that prevent federal funding of gun injury research as well as a federal provision preventing the ATF from sharing the data it collects with researchers. The Coalition supports measures requiring state and local law enforcement to collect this important data and share it with researchers and policymakers, so that we will have the information needed to craft the best laws possible to stop gun violence.

For more information: mapreventgunviolence.org/blog

We at the B-PEACE Campaign are following our Church-wide leaders on the issue of Gun Violence.

Here are some links to the articles about the House of Bishops and House of Deputies statements on the issue:

Bishops: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2013/03/12/carnage-of-gun-violence-must-stop-bishops-say/>

Deputies: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2013/03/01/house-of-deputies-president-vice-president-issue-letter-on-gun-violence/>

And here are two more articles about the Presiding Bishop and national church's positions on this topic:

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/notice/presiding-bishop-katharine-jefferts-schori-gun-violence>

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/notice/episcopal-church-focuses-gun-violence-march-25-stations-cross-washington-dc>

Last year, the Diocesan Council voted to pass a resolution which makes the “Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts” a signatory member of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence.

Whereas the Presiding Bishop, the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops have called on Episcopalians to enter into a conversation and to urge legislative action with respect to firearms; and

Whereas the Task Force and Bishop Shaw have joined with the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence (“Coalition”) to have such a conversation and to urge appropriate action;

Therefore, let it be:

Resolved, that the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts join with the Task Force and Bishop Shaw in supporting and joining the efforts of the Coalition to enter into conversation and to urge appropriate legislative action with respect to firearms, consistent with the statement of the House of Deputies dated Friday, March 1, 2013 (copy attached as “B”).

Explanation: Pursuant to the request made in the anti-violence Resolution passed by the 227th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, the Diocesan Council established a task force named the B-PEACE for Jorge Campaign. That Task Force adopted a comprehensive approach to anti-violence including:

- Programs for youth
- Employment for teens and young adults
- Academic excellence in public schools
- Communities for families
- End to gun violence

The final priority, an End to Gun Violence, has been the subject of statements from the Presiding Bishop, the House of Deputies, and the House of Bishops, all urging a conversation and action concerning gun legislation.

Consistent with the Diocesan Resolution and the statements for the National Church, Bishop Shaw and the Task Force have supported and joined with the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence. The Task Force asks the Diocesan Council to approve the above resolution so that the Diocese also will be clear in its support and participation in the Coalition.

Resolved, that the 227th Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts requests Diocesan Council to establish an ongoing anti-violence task force in memory of Jorge Fuentes to examine the root causes of violence within the many and varied communities in and around eastern Massachusetts, and be it further

Resolved that the 227th Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts encourages all of its congregations and members to pray and work to address and alleviate the root causes of violence within our communities, recognizing, empowering and proclaiming the dignity of every human being, with God’s help, as promised in our Baptismal Covenant, and be it further

Resolved, that the Jorge Fuentes Anti-Violence Task Force be charged to investigate methods and models to alleviate the root causes of violence, consulting with communities of faith, social service and government agencies and interfaith communities, to develop materials and programs for congregational, deanery and diocesan use in broadening this effort, and be it further

Resolved, that the Jorge Fuentes Anti-Violence Task Force report back to the 228th Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts its progress and findings, which may include success stories of local efforts in order to share the wisdom we have acquired, and further strengthen our efforts to alleviate the root causes of violence, working toward useful methods and models that we might share with other communities of faith and the wider Episcopal Church.

NOTICES

June 11, 2013
 United Thank Offering Awards: \$1.5 million for Episcopal Church, Anglican Communion mission and ministry

June 10, 2013
 Rosalie Simmonds Ballentine elected Episcopal Church lay representative to Anglican Consultative Council

June 10, 2013
 Executive Council awards Episcopal Church Constable Fund Grants

June 8, 2013
 Presiding Bishop's Opening Remarks to Executive Council

June 8, 2013
 President of House of Deputies Opening Remarks to Executive Council

June 8, 2013
 EYE 14 location announced

June 6, 2013
 Save the date: Churchwide conference April 9-11, 2014

May 30, 2013
 Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop's office notifies Diocese of Southwestern Virginia of successful canonical consent process

House of Deputies President, Vice President issue letter

The Episcopal Church
 Office of Public Affairs
Friday, March 1, 2013

Episcopal Church House of Deputies President the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings and Vice President the Hon. Byron Rushing have issued the following letter to deputies on gun violence.

February 28, 2013

Dear Deputies:

In the weeks since the horrific shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, the debate about guns in American life and culture has been renewed. Advocates for stricter gun restrictions vow not to let the issue be eclipsed by the next news cycle, and new coalitions of faith leaders and community activists demand that all of us, especially our children, be safe from guns in our homes, communities, and streets.

Since the day when twenty-eight people died in Newtown, more than 2300 people in the United States have been killed by guns. Far too many of the dead are poor, young people of color. They have been dying for years, too often unnoticed, on the streets of Chicago, Baltimore, New Orleans, Newark and scores of other cities and towns. We have not been galvanized as we should have been by the cries of their anguished families and friends. As we work to end gun violence now, we must repent of not having done it sooner.

At its meeting that concluded yesterday, the Executive Council passed a resolution that reaffirms the General Convention's longstanding support of restrictions on the sale, use and ownership of guns and its commitment to adequate funding for mental health services. The resolution also allows The Episcopal Church to join other faith-based advocates in working to make gun trafficking a federal crime. This will give law enforcement officials the power to investigate and prosecute straw purchasers, gun traffickers and their networks. Most of all, it calls on all Episcopalians to work toward ending the cycles of violence that fuel the epidemic of gun crime.

In what remains of Lent, we hope that deputies will help lead the church to fulfill this resolution. In the words of the Executive Council resolution, let us "examine our own cultural attitudes toward violence through efforts in our own congregations and communities, to repent of our own roles in the glorification and trivialization of violence, and to commit ourselves to another way."

Faithfully,

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings
 President, House of Deputies

The Hon. Byron Rushing
 Vice-President, House of Deputies

PS Across the church, many coalitions, congregations and dioceses are already advocating against gun violence. We encourage you to learn more about the work and witness of Episcopalians across the church by joining the conversation on the [Episcopalians Against Gun Violence Facebook page](#) and on [Twitter @TheCrossLobby](#).

 Share |  [MoShare](#) 



Massachusetts State Gun Reform: COMMITMENT CARD

Name _____

Mailing address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

Congregation/Town _____

Options for Commitment - Please check all that apply. Thank you!

_____ I will pray for our legislators to have wisdom and courage in drafting new gun legislation for our state.

_____ I will write a letter or postcard to my legislator, asking him or her to support stronger gun laws.

_____ I will call my legislator and express my desire for him/her to support stronger gun laws.

_____ I will invite the legislators in my district to our church to have a discussion about gun reform.

_____ I will send a letter to my local newspaper supporting stronger gun laws.

_____ Sign me up for the B-PEACE for Jorge Newsletter to stay updated on the campaign.

Dear Representative _____,

I am writing as your constituent to urge you to play a leadership role in passing meaningful legislation to reduce gun violence in Massachusetts. More than 30,000 Americans lose their lives to gun violence every year in this country, including more than 2,800 children, and more than 200 of those killed each year are residents of Massachusetts. Since the Sandy Hook School massacre of 20 innocent children and six courageous educators on December 14, 2012, more than 2,500 men, women and children have senselessly lost their lives each month to gun violence in America. Massachusetts has been a leader in reducing gun violence, but there is more we can and must do to prevent the ongoing tragedies that are impacting far too many of our families and communities.

As you consider gun violence prevention legislation, please ensure that the following priorities are addressed:

1. Universal background checks at point of sale every time a gun is sold, including private sales, internet sales and gun shows;
2. Sharing of all records of adjudicated commitments for mental health and substance abuse with the National Instant Check System as required by federal law;
3. A suitability standard for all gun licenses, with discretion for local licensing authorities;
4. Limitation of handgun sales to one per month to deter trafficking and straw purchasing; and
5. Data collection and sharing by law enforcement regarding where crime guns are coming from.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Name: _____ Phone #: _____
 Address: _____ Email: _____
 City, state, zip: _____

Dear Senator _____,

I am writing as your constituent to urge you to play a leadership role in passing meaningful legislation to reduce gun violence in Massachusetts. More than 30,000 Americans lose their lives to gun violence every year in this country, including more than 2,800 children, and more than 200 of those killed each year are residents of Massachusetts. Since the Sandy Hook School massacre of 20 innocent children and six courageous educators on December 14, 2012, more than 2,500 men, women and children have senselessly lost their lives each month to gun violence in America. Massachusetts has been a leader in reducing gun violence, but there is more we can and must do to prevent the ongoing tragedies that are impacting far too many of our families and communities.

As you consider gun violence prevention legislation, please ensure that the following priorities are addressed:

1. Universal background checks at point of sale every time a gun is sold, including private sales, internet sales and gun shows;
2. Sharing of all records of adjudicated commitments for mental health and substance abuse with the National Instant Check System as required by federal law;
3. A suitability standard for all gun licenses, with discretion for local licensing authorities;
4. Limitation of handgun sales to one per month to deter trafficking and straw purchasing; and
5. Data collection and sharing by law enforcement regarding where crime guns are coming from.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Name: _____ Phone #: _____
 Address: _____ Email: _____
 City, state, zip: _____