

To: Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder Commissioners

### **Notice of Annual Meeting of the Presbytery of Transylvania**

The Presbytery of Transylvania will meet on Saturday, December 7, 2019, at Korean United Presbyterian Church, 3534 Tates Creek Road, Lexington, KY, 40517. (The Presbytery thanks the pastor, staff, leaders, and members of Korean United Church for hosting the presbytery meeting.)

The Presbytery convenes at 10:00 AM. Registration opens at 9:00 AM. Please email Robyn at [rjustus@transypby.org](mailto:rjustus@transypby.org) with the name(s) of your commissioner(s) so that a printed nametag can be provided. If you are unable to attend, please request an excused absence from the Stated Clerk. Email: [statedclerk@transypby.org](mailto:statedclerk@transypby.org). Lunch costs \$8.00. If you should need childcare, please make your request with Robyn at [rjustus@transypby.org](mailto:rjustus@transypby.org) by December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The meeting will include a panel discussion of the Moderator's yearly theme (*Life Together*) with a focus on issues surrounding gun violence, morning worship and Communion, and other business items. (See following documents for more information on the panel discussion.) The meeting docket and reports can be found here: <https://transypby.org/december-7-2019-presbytery-meeting/>

The host church supports missionaries in Myanmar and Nepal and they invite the presbytery to share in this ministry. An offering will be taken during worship for this purpose. (Checks should be made to Lexington Korean Presbyterian Church.)

God's blessings to each one and see you soon in Lexington.

The Rev. Jerry L. Utt, II  
Stated Clerk

## *LIFE TOGETHER*

Dear Friends:

Throughout 2019 we have been spending time at each of our meetings talking about our *life together*, including Jesus' hopes for us as a community (Jan), spiritual practices (Mar), stewardship (May), and markers of our faith/life journey (Aug). These conversations have provided opportunity to share faith and deepen acquaintance with each other, and hopefully they have provided preparation for talking together about hard realities in the world, in the church, and in our lives.

Our December 7 meeting provides occasion to talk about one of the hard realities of our *life together* in the world, namely gun violence. In August we affirmed a *Statement on Gun Violence*, which was commended to congregations for their own reflection, conversation, and response. That *Statement* included instruction to the Coordinating Commission to provide a follow-up workshop. Our *Life Together* conversation on December 7 is a step in that direction.

Toward that end...

... We have invited three elders from Transylvania Presbytery to serve as "panelists" for our conversation, including ruling elder Greg Motley and teaching elders Kathy Riley and Rollin Tarter. Greg has experience with the reality of gun violence in his capacity as Morgan County Sheriff. Kathy has experience with the issue in her work with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Rollin has deep experience in community mental health.

... Kathy and Rollin have provided brief information pieces, included in the packet, for your advance reading and reflection.

... Congregational resources will be available at the meeting, as will Bill McConnell from the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Our conversation on December 7 will be approximately one hour and will focus on causes of gun violence, effects of gun violence, and responses to gun violence.

The purpose of this conversation is two-fold. First, we hope to deepen our understanding of a reality affecting some of us very directly and all of us indirectly. Second, we hope to model a way of *life together* enabling us to talk with each other and respond to hard realities in the world with the love of Christ. Feel free to invite others from your congregations to join us for this important time together.

Peace,  
Mike Ward, Moderator

## *Transylvania Presbytery Forum On Gun Safety and the Prevention of Violence Dec. 7, 2019*

Every day in the U.S. 85 people die from gunfire and 191 are injured. Over the course of a typical year, well over 30,000 will be killed through gun-related murder, suicide (2/3 of the deaths), accident or police intervention. Approximately 70,000 will survive gun injuries. Over 3,000 of the victims are children and teens (ages 0-19), 9 children a day. Almost 800 children end their lives with guns each year. Second amendment rights of citizens are supported by recent Supreme Court decisions. Those decisions also affirm that reasonable constraints to prevent irresponsible ownership and practices are not forbidden.

2017 data from the Center for Disease Control ranks Kentucky 17<sup>th</sup> among the states in overall firearm deaths. Data from the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence confirms that states with the least deaths from firearms are states with more restrictive gun ownership laws. They are California, Massachusetts, New York, and Hawaii.

Kentucky statutes currently do not:

- Require a background check prior to the transfer of a firearm between private parties
- Prohibit the transfer or possession of assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines
- License firearm owners
- Require the registration of firearms
- Limit the number of firearms that may be purchased at one time
- Impose a waiting period on firearm purchases
- Require firearm owners to report lost or stolen firearms to law enforcement
- Significantly regulate ammunition sales

### **Recommendations**

#### **A. Congregations**

To awaken members to the faith dimensions of our on-going tragedy, we can encourage the church at every level to become informed to prevent violence; to get involved with community organizations working on gun violence prevention; to develop and use liturgies that name gun violence, and which contain prayers for victims and perpetrators of gun violence; as well as confession of our own complicity in the perpetuation and toleration of violence in our culture.

#### **B. Communities**

To assist congregations and members in supporting local and state initiatives we recommend

1. that the church encourage citizens, hunters, and law-enforcement officials who regularly handle weapons properly to be wise examples in reducing risks and teaching how to prevent the misuse of deadly force
2. that churches and other entities prominently display signs that prohibit carrying guns onto their property.

That the church support and advocate for policies that correct the deficits in Kentucky statutes to: require licensing, registration, and waiting periods to allow comprehensive background checks, and cooling-off periods, for all guns sold; advocate for aid to law-enforcement agencies to trace crime guns and promote public safety; support the adoption of red-flag legislation for law enforcement removal of guns from situations such as domestic violence, suicidal threat, and from people whose criminal record reflects violence.

- Rollin H. Tarter, HR

Resources for Gun Violence Prevention, Transylvania Presbytery, December 7, 2019

### **PCUSA Resources**

Deanna Hollis, Coordinator, Gun Violence Prevention Ministries Coordinator with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (421) 702-2265 [deanna@presbypeacefellowship.org](mailto:deanna@presbypeacefellowship.org)

Gun Violence, Gospel Values: Mobilizing in Response to God's Call, Revised in 2019  
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resources/topics/gun-violence/>

Standing Our Holy Ground: 10 Things You Can Do About Gun Violence  
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/standing-our-holy-ground-10-things-you-can-do-to-end-gun-violence/>

Gun Violence Prevention Congregational Toolkit

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/gun-violence-prevention-congregational-toolkit/>

Video: Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence, Revised 2017

<https://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/dvd-trigger/>

Hymn – “To A Place of Celebration”

<https://www.pcusa.org/resource/gun-violence-hymn-to-a-place-of-celebration-81402/>

### **Reference materials**

James Atwood, America and Its Guns: A Theological Expose  
Gundamentalism and Where It Is Taking America

Collateral Damage: Changing the Conversation About Firearms and Faith

Daniel W. Webster, John S. Vernick, eds., Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis

Gun Violence Archive <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org>

Most extensive data base on current gun violence incidents. Lists all incidents by Congressional District. Doesn't track suicides, which accounts for 2/3 of fatalities.

Gun Violence Statistics at a Glance, 2018 <https://www.thetrace.org/2018/12/gun-violence-facts-statistics-2018/>

### **Legislation**

Kentucky's State Statutes National Ranking for Gun Violence Prevention  
<https://lawcenter.giffords.org/scorecard/#KY>

**Advocacy Group** Moms Demand Action <https://momsdemandaction.org/>

# HOW PDA RESPONDS TO PUBLIC VIOLENCE

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) responds to public violence as a disaster and supports mid-councils that request assistance as they reach out to help their communities recover.

- **National Response Team (NRT) deployment:** members of PDA's NRT provide a ministry of accompaniment and presence throughout the various phases of a human-caused disaster from impact to recovery. NRT members can be deployed at the invitation of the mid council to provide a ministry of presence, assessment of resilience/spiritual discernment, facilitate ecumenical and community partnership in response and recovery, advocate for spiritual caregivers and more. Support can be long-term as anniversaries will often bring back strong emotions.
- **Liturgical resources for worship and special services:** Worship resources are available on the PDA website. If invited, PDA can provide worship planning around significant disaster-related dates and events.
- **Trainings:** PDA can lead workshops in Responding to Human Caused Disaster as Faith Leaders, Emotional and Spiritual Care, Resilience and Renewal for Responders, and Compassion Fatigue and Resilience. Online trainings, including active shooter training and security guidance for congregations from partner organizations are available at [www.pcusa.org/PDAmidcouncil](http://www.pcusa.org/PDAmidcouncil).
- **Facilitate Clergy Retreats:** PDA can provide customized retreats (ecumenical and interfaith) addressing the aftermath of violence for faith leaders that include liturgical seasons, bible studies, self-care, worship planning and more. PDA can also offer a clergy sabbatical for highly affected clergy to regain resilience in ministry.
- **PDA grants** are available to mid councils to assist faith communities responding in the aftermath of violence.
- **Healing Camps:** A collaboration between PDA and Ferncliff Camp, the first healing camp was offered in 1998 after the school shooting in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Over the next five years, eight programs were offered for youth affected by gun violence, and eventually expanded to include those affected by other disasters and trauma.





- **Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence:** a documentary that frames gun violence as a disaster and public health issue. All those scarred by gun violence ask, “why did this happen to us?” Trigger looks at those experiences and turns to the bigger question, “what can we do to prevent gun violence?” The 51 minute documentary is available on Amazon Prime. A screening kit to support community engagement is available from the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program at [pcusastore.com](http://pcusastore.com).
- **Tapestry: Reweaving the Fabric of Community After Public Violence:** A documentary that examines the effects of public violence events in congregations and communities. Framed through the lens of PDA National Response Team members who have responded to public violence events and supported communities of faith and their leaders through trauma and the healing process (21 minutes). Video and downloadable study guide available at [www.pcusa.org/PDAmidcouncil](http://www.pcusa.org/PDAmidcouncil).
- **The Trauma Pastoral Care Series** training videos: a series of 15 videos intended for pastors caring for those experiencing trauma or experiencing trauma themselves (emphasis on human-caused disasters). Available at [www.pcusa.org/PDAmidcouncil](http://www.pcusa.org/PDAmidcouncil)
- **Recovering from Un-Natural Disasters: A Guide for Pastors and Congregations after Violence and Trauma** (Westminster John Knox Press, 2017): Written by PDA Director Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus and NRT members Bruce Wismer and David Holyan, three pastors with substantial experience responding to mass violence events. PDA will supply complimentary copies upon request to mid councils affected by public violence. Copies are also available to purchase at [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com) and Amazon.
- **Story Ministry:** PDA is exploring how storytelling can be a form of ministry in both the process of healing impacted communities and in connecting wider circles of community. Following the 2010 gas explosion in San Bruno, CA, PDA worked with Bethany Presbyterian Church to help them tell their story. PDA can develop story projects that are only for the impacted community or with communities that want to share their story broadly.



Has there been a disaster or emergency  
in your mid council?  
Email [pda.help@pcusa.org](mailto:pda.help@pcusa.org) or  
call 502-569-8800

PDA is a ministry of  
One Great Hour Of Sharing



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