

*Bishops United Against Gun Violence, a group of more than 70 Episcopal Church bishops working to curtail the epidemic of gun violence in the United States, released this statement today:*

October 2, 2017--We share in the grief and horror of people across our country and, indeed, around the world in the wake of last night's mass shooting in Las Vegas. We have spoken with our Bishops United Against Gun Violence colleague and brother in Christ, Bishop Dan Edwards of the Episcopal Diocese of Nevada, and we have offered him and the people of Nevada our prayers and promises of assistance. We stand in solidarity with the diocese and the people of Nevada as they cope with this massacre.

It has become clichéd at moments such as these to offer thoughts and prayers. But as Christians, we must reflect upon the mass killings that unfold with such regularity in our country. And we must pray: for the victims, for their loved ones, for all who attended to the victims in the immediacy of the shooting, for the first responders who do so much to mitigate the awful effects of these shootings, and for the medical personnel who will labor for many days to save the wounded. We must also enter into the sorrow of those who are most deeply affected by our country's crippling frequent outbursts of lethal gun violence. We must look into our own hearts and examine the ways in which we are culpable or complicit in the gun violence that surrounds us every day.

And then, having looked, we must act. As Christians, we are called to engage in the debates that shape how Americans live and die, especially when they die due to violence or neglect. Yet a probing conversation on issues of gun violence continues to elude us as a nation, and this failure is cause for repentance and for shame. It is entirely reasonable in the wake of mass killings perpetrated by murderers with assault weapons to ask lawmakers to remove such weapons from civilian hands. It is imperative to ask why, as early as this very week, Congress is likely to pass a bill making it easier to buy silencers, a piece of equipment that make it more difficult for law enforcement officials to detect gunfire as shootings are unfolding.

Even as we hold our lawmakers accountable, though, we must acknowledge that a comprehensive solution to gun violence, whether it comes in the form of mass shootings, street violence, domestic violence or suicide, will not simply be a matter of changing laws, but of changing lives. Our country is feasting on anger that fuels rage, alienation and loneliness. From the White House to the halls of Congress to our own towns and perhaps at our own tables, we nurse grudges and resentments rather than cultivating the respect, concern and affection that each of us owes to the other. The leaders who should be speaking to us of reconciliation and the justice that must precede it too often instead stoke flames of division and mistrust. We must, as a nation, embrace prayerful resistance before our worse impulses consume us.

We join with the people of God in fervent prayer that our country will honor those murdered and wounded in Las Vegas by joining in acts of repentance, healing, and public conversation about the gun violence that has ripped us apart, yet again.

*On Tuesday, October 3 at 9 a.m. Pacific time, churches across the Episcopal Diocese of Nevada will toll their bells in mourning for the victims of the shooting in Las Vegas. Bishops United Against Gun Violence invites congregations across the country to toll their own bells in solidarity at the same time: 9 am Pacific/10 am Mountain/11 am Central/Noon Eastern. The number of times the bells are rung will be based on the number of dead as reported at that time including the perpetrator of the violence. Watch for updates on the [Episcopalians Against Gun Violence Facebook page](#).*

*A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis*

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.*

*Book of Common Prayer, page 833*