

BISHOPS UNITED AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE PLANS PRAYERFUL PROCESSION AT GENERAL CONVENTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*“Claiming Common Ground Against Gun Violence”
set for Sunday morning, June 28*

SALT LAKE CITY, May 14, 2015—**Bishops United Against Gun Violence**, a group of more than 60 Episcopal bishops, will sponsor a prayerful procession through the streets of Salt Lake City during the church’s General Convention. The gathering is intended to urge people of faith to seek common ground in efforts to curtail gun violence.

The event, called Claiming Common Ground Against Gun Violence, will begin at 7:15 a.m. on Sunday, June 28, outside the Salt Palace Convention Center on the northwest corner of West Temple and 200 South, said Bishop Mark Beckwith of Newark, a co-convenor of Bishops United.

The service will last roughly one hour and cover a one-mile route, Beckwith said. It will include opening prayers, a stop for testimony in nearby Pioneer Park, and concluding prayers outside the Salt Palace.

Bishop Scott Hayashi of Utah, who survived a gunshot wound as a young man, will be among the speakers. Bishop Jeff Lee of Chicago, Dent Davidson, music chaplain for the House of Bishops, and the Rev. Lester Mackenzie, chaplain to the House of Deputies, will lead prayers and music during the procession.

“The debate over gun violence in our country has become polarized, but it need not be that way,” Beckwith said. “There is broad agreement among people who own guns and people who don’t that universal background checks and other common sense measure save lives while protecting the right of law-abiding citizens to bear arms. We want to focus the attention of our church and the broader public on these common sense reforms, and muster the political will to see them enacted.”

Beckwith convenes Bishops United with Bishops Ian Douglas of Connecticut and Eugene Sutton of Maryland. The group formed after mass shootings at a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin and Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012.

Bishops United supports:

- Expanding the federal background checks system to cover gun shows, internet and commercial sales
- Making gun trafficking a federal crime

- Encouraging the development of “smart gun” technology to reduce accidental shootings—especially among children
- Requiring that guns be stored safely
- Improving access to mental healthcare for all Americans.

Bishops United Against Gun Violence is an ad hoc group of nearly 60 Episcopal bishops who have come together to explore means of reducing the appalling levels of gun violence in our society, and to advocate for policies and legislation that save lives. Bishops United works against gun violence by forming relationships and coalitions with interfaith colleagues, fellow advocates, and families whose lives have been touched by gun violence; giving voice to voiceless gun violence victims through public liturgy, advocacy, and prayer; and supporting each another in efforts to end gun violence in local communities.

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