



## Bishops United Against Gun Violence Case Statement

Bishops United Against Gun Violence is a group of nearly 100 Episcopal bishops working to curtail the epidemic of gun violence in the United States. The network was formed in early 2013 after mass shootings in 2012 at a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

We believe in a God of life in the face of death who calls our church to speak and act decisively against the unholy trinity of poverty, racism and violence. In the struggle against these evils, our group offers four contributions:

- *public liturgy* including processions, vigils and prayers services to commemorate the dead and inspire the living
- *spiritual support* for those living with gunshot wounds, with grief, with fear and with the temptation of hopelessness, and advocacy for broader and easier access to mental health services for those at risk of suicide
- *sound teaching* for those yearning to bring an ethic of Christian compassion and concern for the common good to bear on debates regarding unjust economic and legal structures, public safety, individual rights and our responsibilities to one another as children of God
- *persistent advocacy* for common sense gun safety measures that enjoy the support of gun owners and non-gun owners alike, such as
  - handgun purchaser licensing
  - background checks on all gun purchasers
  - restrictions on gun ownership by domestic abusers
  - classification of gun trafficking as a federal crime
  - encouragement for the development of “smart gun” technology
  - federal funding for research into gun violence prevention strategies
  - safe storage of firearms

If the movement to curtail gun violence and promote public safety is to succeed, we must call people of good will together under a common banner. We must create experiences through which grief, fear, rage and despair can be transformed into patient and hopeful resolve. We must ground our arguments in an ethic of shared responsibility, support them with clear logic and credible data, and articulate them with charity to those with whom we disagree. And we must be willing to continue speaking when it seems our words make no difference.

To these urgent tasks, we offer particular gifts of our church—its long experience in crafting moving ritual; its devotion to providing pastoral care to those in duress; its history of reasoning theologically about contemporary concerns; and its willingness to follow Jesus in speaking truth, especially when truth is out of season.