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Bishops United Against Gun Violence calls church to pray, elected leaders to act
"One does not offer prayers in lieu of demonstrating political courage, but rather in preparation."

[Bishops United Against Gun Violence](#), a group of [more than 70 Episcopal bishops](#) working to curtail the epidemic of gun violence in the United States, released the following statement on the shootings on Sunday in Sutherland Springs, Texas:

In the wake of the heartbreaking shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, we find ourselves both calling people to prayer, and wishing that the word did not come so readily to the lips of elected leaders who are quick to speak, but take no action on behalf of public safety. In prayer, Christians commend the souls of the faithful departed to the mercy and love of God. We beseech our Creator to comfort the grieving and shield the vulnerable. Prayer is not an offering of vague good wishes. It is not a spiritual exercise that successfully completed exempts one from focusing on urgent issues of common concern. Prayer is not a dodge. In prayer we examine our own hearts and our own deeds to determine whether we are complicit in the evils we deplore. And if we are, we resolve to take action; we resolve to amend our lives.

As a nation, we must acknowledge that we idolize violence, and we must make amends. Violence of all kinds denigrates humankind; it stands against the will of God and the way of Jesus the Christ. The shooting in Sutherland Springs brings the issue of domestic violence, a common thread in many mass killings, into sharp relief. It is not only essential that we keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, but that we, as a society, reject ideologies of male dominance that permeate our culture and the history of our churches.

Each of us has a role to play in our repentance. Elected representatives bear the responsibility of passing legislation that protects our citizenry. If our representatives are not up to this responsibility, we must replace them.

In the meantime, however, we ask that in honor of our many murdered dead, elected leaders who behave as though successive episode of mass slaughter are simply the price our nation pays for freedom stop the reflexive and corrosive repetition of the phrase "thoughts and prayers." One does not offer prayers in lieu of demonstrating political courage, but rather in preparation.