Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace

Challenging the Epidemic of Gun Violence

EDITED BY SHARON ELY PEARSON
Foreword by Mark Beckwith

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Foreword

Mark M. Beckwith

In late November 2012, four Episcopal Church bishops, disturbed by the escalating level of gun violence in our cities, agreed to begin conversations with one another in order to figure out how best to bring our faith and resources to bear on a scourge that was reaching epidemic proportions. Two weeks later, the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, took place, and immediately the concern about gun violence moved from being a threat contained within urban areas to an issue that gripped the whole country. Other bishops wanted to join the conversation. Our first conference call, held just after Christmas in 2012, included more than a dozen bishops. We prayed, we offered support for one another, we reached out to colleagues, we secured staff help—and we began to plan.

We organized an afternoon symposium at our House of Bishops meeting in March 2013. Vincent Demarco, leader of Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence and an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, set the context of the gun violence issue in the country. Four bishops—from Connecticut, Chicago, Washington, DC, and Oklahoma—shared how gun violence has affected their faith and their respective dioceses, and how it deepened their commitment to reduce gun violence. (Parts of Oklahoma Bishop Ed Konieczny's presentation are contained in this volume.) The bishops of Connecticut and Washington organized a "Stations of the Cross" procession on Monday of Holy Week 2013, and more than five hundred Episcopalians from across the country (including seventeen bishops) marched through our nation's capital in the snow and rain to make visible the connection between the biblical story of Jesus's death and the story of an average of thirty thousand deaths every year in the United States due to gun violence.

In April 2013 we joined in the lobbying effort to convince key members of the U.S. Senate to pass the Manchin-Toomey bill, which required expanded background checks for gun purchasers. (The resulting vote was just short of a filibuster-proof majority.) That same month several bishops joined with other committed

Episcopal leaders from across the country to design a conference in Oklahoma City to be held in April 2014—"Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace," many of the presentations from which are contained in this book. We developed a Facebook page, "Episcopalians Against Gun Violence," and a website, www.bishopsagainstgunviolence.org.

We have written op-eds for our local papers. We began to develop local networks with other religious leaders. We have continued to build relationships with local politicians, police departments, and other entities committed to reducing gun violence. We have supported public religious witnesses against gun violence, notably "Cross Walk" in Chicago and a Good Friday Stations of the Cross at gun violence sites in Jersey City, New Jersey. We are encouraging national participation in "Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend" on March 20–22, 2015 (the Fourth Sunday in Lent). We continue to design public worship and witness opportunities, including an outdoor witness to be held at General Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, in July 2015.

As our network of bishops has grown, so have the partnerships with other entities within the Episcopal Church, each in its own way committed to reducing gun violence. I want to thank Sharon Ely Pearson of Church Publishing Incorporated for her initiative and wisdom in bringing so much important written material together—from so many different corners of the Episcopal Church, each reflecting a deepening commitment to reducing gun violence.

From the beginning of our conversations, we have pledged to provide spiritual and political space for different voices and viewpoints to be expressed and heard. The fifty-two active and retired bishops of Bishops United Against Gun Violence (as of September 1, 2014) come from across the country, some representing dioceses that are deeply immersed in gun culture, and others that are largely resistant to it. Our agenda is to be grounded in the gospel, and to move forward in a commitment to reducing gun violence—and to do it together. To that end, we have attempted to reframe the gun violence conversation from a debate about constitutional rights to an issue of public health; from the polarizing discourse of gun control to a conversation about gun safety; from the rights of gun users to a closer scrutiny of gun manufacturers and gun sellers. And to advocate more intentionally for appropriate background checks—which polls indicate an overwhelming majority of Americans support, including a sizable majority of gun owners.

We have seen only too often how gun violence tears apart the fabric of a community. Gun violence is the ultimate act of human

separation: if gun violence doesn't literally separate life from death, gun violence separates people into silos of fear.

There is an urgency for religious communities to step into this vortex of violence and fear. As gun violence creates separation, by definition religion has the capacity to bring people into community. The Latin root of the word "religion"—*religio*—means to bind together. Religion has the capacity, indeed its very purpose, is to create and support community.

The community binding capacity of the Episcopal Church is enormous. When joined with other religious traditions—both within the Christian family and beyond—the capacity to bind broken communities and lives is even greater, and the community fabric can become even stronger. And when we join with mayors (Mayors Against Illegal Guns) and mothers (Moms Demanding Action) who are also deeply committed to reducing gun violence, a powerful and effective witness can be mobilized.

There is a lot of work to do. The challenge can seem overwhelming because, as we know, the forces of resistance are organized and well-funded. As we consider the daunting task ahead, of prayer, advocacy, reflection, and public witness, I invite us to draw on my favorite definition of hope, offered by Jim Wallis, Christian author and witness for social justice: "Hope is believing in spite of the evidence, and then watching the evidence change."

The commitment to reduce gun violence is growing. The partnerships are developing. And as the witness gains momentum, we are seeing the evidence change.

The Rt. Rev. Mark M. Beckwith
Bishop of Newark
Co-convenor, Bishops United Against Gun Violence
The Feast of St. Francis, 2014

Introduction

Sharon Ely Pearson

> Thus says the LORD:
> A voice is heard in Ramah,
> lamentation and bitter weeping.
> Rachel is weeping for her children;
> she refuses to be comforted for her children,
> because they are no more. (Jeremiah 31:15–17)

Using the most recent CDC estimates for yearly deaths by guns in the United States, it is likely that as of August 18, 2014, roughly 58,052 people have died from guns in the United States since the Newtown shootings. If one were to compare that number to the number of deaths *reported in the news* (via the Slate.com partnership with @GunDeaths that has been tracking statistics), the data shows how the story of gun violence in America actually is undertold. On December 14, 2012, Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde of the Diocese of Washington joined with the Very Reverend Gary Hall, dean of Washington National Cathedral, "calling on our national leaders to enact more effective gun control measures. We know from experience that such calls go unheeded. But what if this time you and I took up this issue and wouldn't put it down until something was done? . . . Today we grieve, but soon we act."[1]

The following Sunday, Dean Hall spoke out against gun violence in a sermon that captured the feelings of many Christians as he called upon our country to embrace stricter gun control measures. His statement, "I believe the gun lobby is no match for the cross lobby" became a call to action. "As followers of Jesus, we have the moral obligation to stand for and with the victims of gun violence and to work to end it. The massacre of these twenty-eight people in Connecticut is, for me at least, the last straw. And I believe it is for you. Enough is enough. The Christian community—indeed the entire American faith community—can no longer tolerate this

1 A statement released on December 14, 2012, from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington following the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

persistent and escalating gun violence directed against our people. Enough is enough."[2]

Violence in our communities continues to invade our neighborhoods in cities and towns across America. Debates on gun control, legislation, the Second Amendment, and politics continue to divide us instead of drawing us together to make positive change. In April 2014, over two hundred Episcopalians and friends gathered in Oklahoma City for two days to stand and learn with one another how we as the Episcopal Church, corporately and individually, can stand up in unity as violence continues to permeate our society. In the wake of very recent events—the shooting of children at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and moviegoers in a theatre in Arvada, Colorado—attendees gathered to pray, listen to presentations, participate in workshops, and exchange ideas and network as a means to begin to work to reclaim the Gospel of Peace in a world that seems out of control. The event concluded with a Eucharist and dinner following a visit to the Oklahoma City National Memorial, the site of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building bombing on April 19, 1995, where 168 souls, including 19 children, were lost.

This book is one of those responses. Months have gone by since that April gathering, but violence in our communities continues to proliferate, especially gun violence. While a microcosm of our church met in Oklahoma City, the work that was shared in the presentations and resources (plus others) are within these pages, offered to the wider church—individuals, congregations, and dioceses—to begin to act out in nonviolent ways, to stand for Jesus's gospel of justice, reconciliation, and peace.

I was not able to attend the event, but followed the proceedings through social media, wondering, "What can I do? How can these remarkable words and actions be more accessible to others?" Thus I challenged myself and invited all those who have contributed to this book to make this a reality. My hope is that this can be a resource for the church in which we can teach our children that nonviolence is possible, that we can have a voice in the public arena to speak against violence in our communities, and that by virtue of our baptism we are extolled to proclaim the Gospel of Peace in our words as well as our actions.

Each chapter ends with several reflection questions that can be used individually or in a small group. The book concludes with an Action Guide and list of references and resources so that

2 "The Cross Lobby" *Cathedral Age* Easter 2013, 14–17

congregations can begin the process of engaging in the conversation of reclaiming the Gospel of Peace as a faith community in prayerful, respectful, and open ways.

I am grateful to those who accepted my invitation of adding their words to this resource; everyone I approached to contribute to this book said yes. Each essay, resource, and painting was given gratis so that the importance of this work and mission continues. May their thoughts, images, and prayers gathered here provide inspiration and the impetus for each of us to leave our comfort zone and proclaim the Good News of Christ's redeeming love in our homes, churches, cities, and nation. Let us become a Cross Lobby in the truest sense.

Sharon Ely Pearson, editor
Church Publishing Incorporated
The Feast of St. Francis, 2014

PART IV

PRAY: THE WORK

"Faith, Hope, Love" Acrylic on canvas ©2014 Roger Hutchison.
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Prayers and Litanies

A Litany of Peace[66] *Psalm 37 Noli aemulari*

Do not fear because of the wicked; do not be envious of the wrongdoers

For they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do what is good, so that you will live in the land and enjoy security.

Take delight in the LORD, and God will give you the desires of your heart.

Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for God;

Do not fear over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.

Refrain from anger and forsake wrath.

Do not fear: it leads only to evil.

The wicked plot against the righteous, gnash their teeth at them;

66 From the closing Eucharist at "Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace," April 11, 2014

But, the Lord laughs at the wicked and sees that their day is coming.

The wicked draw their sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to kill those who walk uprightly;

Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Better is a little that the righteous person has

Than the abundance of many wicked.

The wicked borrow and do not pay back

But the righteous are generous and keep giving.

Our steps are made firm by the LORD when God delights in our way.

Though we stumble, we shall not fall headlong, for the Lord holds us by the hand.

Depart from evil, and do what is good; so you may abide forever.

The LORD loves justice and will not forsake the faithful.

The wicked watch for the righteous, and seek to kill them.

The LORD will not abandon them to their power, or let them be condemned when they are brought to trial.

The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD

God is their refuge in the time of trouble.

The Lord helps them and rescues them

God rescues them from the wicked, and saves them because they take refuge in the LORD.

The Prayers of the People[67]

May we call upon God to inspire us to do the work of being peacemakers.

Eternal God, in whom the whole family of earth is one, breathe your spirit into our hearts that we may establish a global community of trust and fellowship, justice and peace.

Illumine the darkness of our minds that we may see your light, think your thoughts, and serve your glory by advancing the greater good of all people.

Silence

Reform, O God, the passions and designs of our hearts.

Let your steady hand guide the nations, and bring forth out of our discord a harmony more perfect than we can conceive—a new humility, a new understanding, a new purity and sincerity, a new sense of truth, and a new hunger and thirst for your love to rule the earth.

Silence

Grant, O God, that all leaders may approach every question of foreign and domestic policy from your point of view, that their noblest thoughts may be purified and strengthened.

Help us check in ourselves and in others every temper which makes for violence, and all promptings of self-assertion, isolation, and arrogance, that we may understand the aspirations of other countries, and other peoples, and may gladly do what lies in us to remove every misunderstanding, thus serving the welfare of all people.

Silence

O God, in whom is the power of perfect understanding: heal the dissensions which divide us.

Bring us back into that unity of love, which is the likeness of your nature.

67 From the Closing Eucharist at "Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace," April 22, 2014

Silence

Holy God, you have made of one blood all nations that dwell upon earth. Look with mercy upon us, and drive away our evil passions of fear and hatred.

Grant that united in good will we may live together in charity and joy, each in the praise of great achievements, in rivalry of good and beneficent deeds, and sharing in truthful and just dealings with one another.

Silence

Increase, O God, the spirit of neighborliness among all who dwell on earth, that in peril we may uphold one another, in suffering tend one another, and in loneliness befriend one another.

Grant us brave and enduring hearts that we may be strengthened, until the strife of these days be ended and you give peace in our time; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Litany on the Pebbles of Love[68]

Prior to this litany, distribute a small stone to each participant, or have a bowl of small pebbles in the center or front of those gathered to pray.

In the face of the boulders of disrespect for all who are different,

Let us be pebbles of respect for the dignity and diversity of every person.

In the face of the boulders of having it always my way,

Let us be pebbles of mutuality.

In the face of the boulders of tuning out others,

Let us be pebbles of listening.

In the face of the boulders of grudges and retaliation,

Let us be pebbles of forgiving love.

In the face of the boulders of using more than our share,

Let us be pebbles of simple sufficiency.

In the face of the boulders of violence against other species and the earth herself,

68 From the Institute of Peace and Justice, http://www.ipj-ppj.org.

Let us be pebbles of beauty and respect.

In the face of the boulders of violent entertainment,

Let us be pebbles of playfulness.

In the face of the boulders of discrimination and exploitation because of race, age, gender, or sexual orientation,

Let us be pebbles solidarity.

In the face of escalating violence, escalate love as participants take their pebbles and pray the prayer attributed to St. Francis.

Litany on the Nonviolence of Jesus[69]

If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! (Luke 19:42)

Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem and its disregard of Samaritans and lepers, and you weep today over the escalating violence of racism and hate in our own society and world.

Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

Let us escalate love.

Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem and its humiliating occupation by the Roman Empire, and you weep today over the escalating violence of terrorism and humiliating occupation in your Holy Land.

Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

Let us escalate love.

Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem and its exploitation of the poor, and you weep today over the escalating violence of poverty in our own society and world.

Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

Let us escalate love.

Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem and its disregard of women and children, and you weep today over escalating violence against women and children in our own society and world.

Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

69 From the Institute of Peace and Justice, www.ipj-ppj.org.

Let us escalate love.
Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem and its deadly use of weapons of violence, and you weep today over the proliferation of the weapons of violence, from handguns to nuclear bombs, in our own society and world.
Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

Let us escalate love.
Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem where capital punishment was rampant, and you weep today over the escalating use of capital punishment in our own society.
Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

Let us escalate love.
Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem where the forces of domination were everywhere, and you weep today over the escalating domination—all the 'isms—in our own society and world.
Jesus, in the face of escalating violence,

Let us escalate love.

Prayers

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*For the Human Family*, Book of Common Prayer, 815)

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (*Collect for Peace*, Book of Common Prayer, 258)

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with

mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*In Times of Conflict*, Book of Common Prayer, 824)

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. (*A Prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi*, Book of Common Prayer, 833)

Almighty God, you proclaim your truth in every age by many voices: Direct, in our time, we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of this people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*For those who Influence Public Opinion*, Book of Common Prayer, 827)

God of justice and mercy, we cry out to you from a land dominated by gun violence. Empower the members of Congress with such wisdom, insight, and courage that they will pass effective legislation against the murders and injuries that now rage as an epidemic among us. Help all of us to step forward to release our nation from bondage to weapons and enslavement to fear. May we greet with joy the new freedom you intend for this land. All this we ask in the name of Jesus our liberator, the prince of peace. Amen. (*Prayer for Gun Violence Prevention* by The Reverend Charles Hoffacker, Parish of St. Monica and St. James, Capitol Hill, Washington, DC.)

The Way of the Cross

The Way of the Cross: Challenging a Culture of Violence was held on March 25, 2013, in Washington, DC. The booklet of prayers and reflections, compiled by the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, can be downloaded, along with other resources at https://www.episcopalct.org/Beliefs-and-Practices/Challenging-Violence/

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Anointed for Peace: A Service of Healing and Hope

Stephen C. Holton

This liturgy was offered on Memorial Day in 2014, the 100th anniversary of World War I.

Invocation
Leader: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts.
People: The whole earth is full of his Glory.

Prayers for Those Who Have Died

The Word of God *Genesis 4:3–16*
Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out into the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from the soil, and

I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me." Then the Lord said to him, "Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a seven fold vengeance." And the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who came upon him would kill him (vv. 8–15).

Conversation *Precious Lord, take my hand*
God did not react to Cain's violence. Scripture says, six times, that Cain has killed his brother. It does not ignore the violence. Neither should we. The seventh time, God sends Cain away. The seventh time, God rests from anger, and reasserts life and love. We can do the same.

Sit with someone you do not know. One at a time, each speak to the other for five minutes of the violence he/she has done or allowed in thought, word, or deed. Then speak for five minutes each; forgiving violence you have endured. Yet even Jesus did not forgive directly. He asked God to "forgive them . . . for they know not what they do."

Psalm 51

Prayers of Concern about Violence and for Peace

Anointing of Hands

Clench your fists to hold the violence one last time. Then drop it. Put down the burden of violence, and take up the Gospel of Peace

Hymn *O Lord, hear my prayer (Taizé Community)*

The Peace *Greet everyone with the words: "Peace be with you."*

The World Peace Prayer

Lead me from death to life
From falsehood to truth;
Lead me from despair to hope,
From fear to trust;
Lead me from hate to love,
From war to peace,
Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.

Hymn 719 *Oh beautiful, for spacious skies*

The Reverend Stephen C. Holton is the assistant for Christian formation at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Irvington, New York.

With a Mission Enterprise Zone grant from the Episcopal Church, he developed Warriors of the Dream, a youth program in Harlem that gathers youth of many faiths with artists, community leaders, and elders to nurture gifts, teach dialogue skills, develop leaders, and build the neighborhood.

PART V

ENGAGE: THE NEXT STEPS

Hartford, Connecticut was selected as the kick-off site for "Raise the Caliber," a national advocacy campaign to end illegal gun violence. Central to the campaign was the unveiling of a public art installation by Michael Kalish. The work, a 30-foot high sculpture created from 2,000 lbs. of illegal guns bought off the streets through voluntary gun buybacks, was unveiled in September 2014 and will travel to cities across the country in 2015. Photo ©2014 Marc Yves Regis. Used with permission.

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Action Guide

There are a variety of avenues that can be taken to reflect upon this book in a group setting. In a faith community, it can be a focal point for an Advent or Lenten evening adult program that is bracketed by a meal and worship. It can be a study series offered during a Sunday morning education time.

However, reflection tends to be an inward process. That is important, but being a disciple of Jesus Christ means to put one's faith into action. Hopefully the essays within this book have stirred up within you the desire to do something more, to put these words into action, to be silent no longer. Whether it is individually or as part of your faith community, explore the issues that are raised within these pages on a deeper level—violence, mental health, poverty, racism, gun laws, education—and develop ways to address them through local, national, or even global means.

The preliminary work you do as a group will be most important before attempting to implement any action. Pray together. Build community and share stories with one another before addressing the next steps. Pray some more. Caitlin Cecella offers a beginning

point in chapter 1 that she learned from Bishop Eugene Sutton (adapted):

1. Stand up
2. Say your name and where you live
3. Share why you have come to this gathering

This book can be discussed chapter-by-chapter or focused on a specific issue related to gun violence, such as legislation, advocacy, or mental health. Your group may wish to have a chance to express which issue they feel is most pressing or one that the whole group can get behind for further action steps. It provides rich material for conversation and a challenge for engagement. Tap into the prayers, Scripture, reflection questions, and examples that have been given here. Seek out what is occurring in your local community as well as on the state level. But build community with one another first. Before beginning any gathering, follow Eric Law's process of "Mutual Invitation" (below) and "Rights, Respect, and Responsibilities" (Chapter 28) for setting up group norms.

It is hoped that groups who come together to consider this book will not experience it as a short-term study, but one that becomes a lifelong normative commitment toward working for a more peaceful, hopeful, and just society.

Guidelines for Small Group Discussion

Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace explores deep-rooted social and spiritual issues such as mental health, constitutional rights, race, poverty, class, and violence. Creating a safe space for such conversations is essential in order for individuals to be fully engaged and participate at a level that promotes growth and action.

Eric Law also offers an easy-to-follow model of establishing group norms beginning any meeting, through his "Respectful Communication Guidelines":[70]

R = Take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel with blaming others
E = EMPATHETIC listening
S = Be SENSTIVE to differences in communication styles

70 Law, Erik H. F. *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1996), 87.

P = PONDER what your hear and feel before you speak.
E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions
C = Keep CONFIDENTIALITY
T = TOLERATE ambiguity because we are *not* here to debate who is right or wrong.

There are several specific models for creating an environment for open discussion. Parker Palmer's "circles of trust" as explored in *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994) is "a space between us that honors the soul." He shows how people in settings ranging from friendship to organizational life can support each other on the journey toward living "divided no more."

Eric H. F. Law has a wonderful technique for active listening in his work, *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993). The technique is presented as a tool for multicultural conversation and dialogue, but it seems valuable for any number of settings and circumstances. Below is an adaptation of Law's "Mutual Invitation" technique.

1. Begin by letting everyone know the amount of time provided for the group's conversation.
2. Carefully name the topic to be discussed, the information to be shared, or the question(s) to be answered.
3. Read the following directions: In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way. The leader/convener will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she invites another person to share. The person whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another person to share. If the person invited does not wish to say anything, that person simply says, "pass" and proceeds to invite another to share. This process is followed until everyone has been invited to speak.
4. The process is a discipline for the group that allows everyone to share the power of selection and everyone to share the power of response. Be patient with one another. Allow time between invitations to hear what has been said. Silence is welcome. A person may wish to pass on speaking, but no one should be allowed to pass on inviting. No one should invite for another. If the person who is supposed to invite forgets to do so, remind them that they have the privilege of selection.

Chapter Reflection Questions

At the conclusion of each chapter, a series of questions is asked for reflection. All of them begin with these five questions as a starting point for personal thoughts or group discussion. They are followed by specific questions to the chapter.

1. Where is your story in this story?
2. Where do you see God?
3. What causes you to pause and rethink your previous assumptions?
4. What cries out to you?
5. What calls to you?

Topical Study

Instead of gathering to discuss *Reclaiming the Gospel of Peace* chapter by chapter, you may wish to focus on the topics or themes that run throughout the text. Any of the questions or Scripture can be used or modified to fit the topics, of which a few are listed here:

- The Second Amendment
- Violence (gun, partner-to-partner)
- Elder abuse
- Child abuse
- Domestic violence
- Poverty
- Racism
- War
- Education
- Justice
- Activism and organizing
- The Baptismal Covenant
- Gun laws
- Reconciliation

Guidelines for Bible Study (optional)

Scripture is an important element to any group gathering or action step. It should ground all conversations and decision-making. Many pieces of Scripture are used throughout this book and can be used for reflection. One method is the Indaba (African) Bible Study, which offers a means for personal reflection and group insights that may be helpful as the group prepares to discuss each chapter or theme.

1. One person reads the Scripture passage slowly.
2. Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches his or her attention (1 minute).
3. Each shares the word or phrase around the group (3–5 minutes, no discussion).
4. Another person reads the passage slowly (from a different translation, if possible).
5. Each person identifies where this passage touches his or her life today (1 minute).
6. Each shares (3–5 minutes, no discussion).
7. Passage is read a third time (another reader and translation, if possible).
8. Each person names or writes, "From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?" (5 minutes).
9. Each person shares his or her answer (5–10 minutes, no discussion).
10. Each prays for the person on their right, naming what was shared in the other steps (5 minutes).
11. Close with the Lord's Prayer and silence.

The following Scriptures may be especially appropriate

Psalm 34	Habbakuk 1:1–17	Luke 6:20–26
Psalm 72:1–4	Matthew 5:3–12	Acts 4:24–30
Isaiah 2:3–5	Matthew 5:43–48	1 Corinthians 4:16–21
Micah 4:1–5	Matthew 26:52	Ephesians 2:13–18

Possible Action Steps

1. Lobby your state and national representatives on issues such as:
   - *Background checks:* Establish a universal background check system for all persons purchasing a firearm from any seller.
   - *High-risk individuals:* Expand the set of conditions that disqualify an individual from legally purchasing a firearm.
   - *Mental health:* Focus federal restrictions on gun purchases by persons with serious mental illness or the dangerousness of the individual.

- *Trafficking and dealer licensing:* Appoint a permanent director to ATF and provide the agency with the authority to develop a range of sanctions for gun dealers who violate gun sales or other laws.
- *Personalized guns:* Provide financial incentives to states to mandate childproof or personalized guns.
- *Assault weapons and high-capacity magazines*: Ban the future sale of assault weapons and the future sale and possession of large-capacity ammunition magazines.
- *Research funds:* Provide adequate federal funds to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and National Institute of Justice for research into the causes and solutions of gun violence.

2. Meet with other faith traditions in your community to collaborate and join efforts to be a witness to nonviolence in your city or town.
3. Hold an adult forum series, inviting community organizers and leaders to speak on issues of violence, mental health, bullying, partner-to-partner abuse, poverty, and/or racism.
4. Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network and your diocesan chapter to see how you can get involved.

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Rights, Respect, and Responsibilities[71]

Eric H. F. Law

A process to help community members arrive at a set of community principles that they can affirm and uphold to enhance community life.

How to Use This Process

The following is a set of worksheets that participants will complete in a one- to two-hour period. The instructions are on the worksheets themselves. The facilitator needs only to guide the participants through the process.

RIGHTS

Webster's dictionary defines right *as "that which a person has a just claim to; power, privilege, etc. that belongs to a person by law, nature, or traditions."*

1. What are your rights as a member of this community? (Reflect on this on your own and write your ideas below.)

71 Erik H. F. Law, *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 120–24. Used with permission.

2. Move around the room and collect at least two different responses to question 1 from other participants and write them below:
3. Review your answers to questions 1 and 2. What are some concerns that you have regarding your rights and others' rights? (For example, potential conflicts, misinterpretation, dealing with controversy, etc.)

RESPECT

1. Complete the following sentence:
   I know I am respected when . . .

2. Move around the room and collect from others two responses that differ from yours.
   a. I know I am respected when . . .

   b. I know I am respected when . . .

3. Compare the three responses and reflect on the following:
   What are the reasons behind the different perceptions of respect?

RESPONSIBLITIES

1. What are your responsibilities in upholding your own rights in this community?

   One of your responsibilities to uphold your own rights is to communicate with others who you are and how you would like to be treated.
   a. What do others need to know about you for you to feel included?

In what ways can you communicate this information to others in the community?

b. What kind of support do you need to effectively communicate who you are and how you would like to be treated as a member of this community? (Support can come in the form of policy, support group, regular dialogue session, one-on-one sharing, etc.)

2. What are your responsibilities in upholding others' rights in this community?

a. Review your learning from the discussions on rights and respect.
What concrete behavior and attitude adjustments will you make in order to better respect others' rights?

b. If you observed that someone's rights were not respected in this community, what would you do?

3. What are your responsibilities in enabling others in your community to better respect one another's rights?

Possible Community Covenant

1. Review the learning from this activity so far.
2. List three things that you would do to fulfill your responsibilities in respecting and upholding the rights of each person in this community.
   a.

b.

c.

3. List three things that you would NOT do to fulfill your responsibilities to respect and uphold the rights of each person in this community.
   a.

   b.

   c.

4. Submit your list to a central person in your community, who will collect and collage the information. The community will meet again to read and digest the complete list and arrive at a community covenant that everyone can agree to uphold.

The Reverend Erik H. F. Law, an Episcopal priest, is the founder and executive director of the Kaleidoscope Institute, the mission of which is to create inclusive and sustainable churches and communities. For more than twenty years, he has provided transformative and comprehensive training and resources for churches and ministries in all major church denominations in the United States. He blogs at *The Sustainist: Spirituality for Sustainable Communities in a Networked World.* http://ehflaw.typepad.com/blog/

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Annotated Bibliography and Resource List

Books to Assist Your Individual or Group Learning

Ackerman, Peter, and Jack DuVall. *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Non-Violent Conflict* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000) shows how popular movements used nonviolent action to overthrow dictators, obstruct military invaders, and secure human rights in country after country, over the past century. The authors depict how nonviolent sanctions—such as protests, strikes, and boycotts—separate brutal regimes from their means of control. They tell inside stories—how Danes outmaneuvered the Nazis, Solidarity defeated Polish communism, and mass action removed a Chilean dictator—and also how nonviolent power is changing the world today, from Burma to Serbia. PBS also did a documentary based on the book. www.aforcemorepowerful.org

Battle, Michael. *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury, 2009). Ubuntu is an African way of seeing the world—and the people in it—as an intricate web of relationships. Practicing Ubuntu means entering deeply into the compassionate, forgiving love of the Gospel, encouraging harmony and interdependence among individuals and communities.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Prayers for a Privileged People* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008) offers prayers for proclaiming peace, justice, righteousness, and joy in a world that is far from the dream of God. A resource for worship and meetings.

Kraybill, Donald A. *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010). Explores the many questions raised by the killing of five children in a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nichol Mines, Pennsylvania, in 2006 by a gunman in which the grieving community attended the funeral of the killer immediately following the funerals where they had buried their own. The Amish act of forgiveness offers a witness of faith.

Larson, Erik. *Lethal Passage: The Story of a Gun* (New York: Random House, 2011) is the story of how a bullied boy takes out his anger using a gun at school. While based on an event in 1988, Larson's thorough research and story is still applicable today.

Law, Eric H. F. *Inclusion: Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000) offers practical and theological based approaches to enable a community to act inclusively when its boundary is challenged. Within this book Eric has developed a process and model to help a community extend its boundary to include an outsider's experience and perspective in a constructive and faithful way. His "Rights, Respect, and Responsibilities" offer a process for any group to develop a set of community principles before delving into conversations on topics that may be divisive.

Law, Eric H. F. *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993) offers a technique, "Mutual Invitation," for multicultural conversation and dialogue, which is valuable for any number of settings and circumstances.

Palmer, Parker. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994). Using illustrations and practical experience he gained while living at Pendle Hill, a Quaker center for study and contemplation near Philadelphia, Palmer discusses the many ways in which "circles of trust" can support the quest for integrity and meaning as he outlines the key practices of these circles, including speaking center-to-center, deep listening, asking open and honest questions, and honoring silence.

Simpson, Amy. *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013) provides a look at the social and physical realities of mental illness and explores new possibilities for ministry to this stigmatized group,

calling the church to a renewed commitment to people who suffer from mental illness and their families that suffer with them.

Smiley, Tavis, and Cornel West. *The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto* (New York: SmileyBooks, 2012) was the focus of a diocesan-wide book discussion held in the Diocese of Massachusetts during Lent 2013. Bishop M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE, described the book as one that "asks us to re-examine some of our assumptions about poverty" and "a way to begin to educate ourselves about poverty, one of the root causes of violence." The book study came in response to the shooting death of nineteen-year-old Jorge Fuentes, a young leader in a youth program at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Boston. You can download the study guide here: http://www.diomass.org/webfm_send/1955.

Tutu, Desmond. *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Colorado Springs, CO: Image, 2000) offers his reflections on the profound wisdom he gained by helping South Africa through the painful experience of moving from apartheid and despotism to reconciliation.

Webster, Daniel W., and Jon S. Vernick, eds. *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) is the result of more than twenty of the world's leading experts on gun violence and policy convened by the Johns Hopkins University to summarize relevant research and recommend policies that are both constitutional and have broad public support. Collected for the first time in one volume, this reliable, empirical research and legal analysis will help lawmakers, opinion leaders, and concerned citizens identify policy changes to address mass shootings, along with the less-publicized gun violence that takes an average of eighty lives every day.

Winkler, Adam. *Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013) shares the history (and controversies) of gun use and ownership in the United States. The author shows that we can have both an individual right to have guns for self-defense and, at the same time, laws designed to improve gun safety. His thesis is that the right to bear arms and gun control are not mutually exclusive propositions and that race and racism is often at the heart of the issue.

Organizations to Support Your Action

Bishops United Against Gun Violence is a coalition of Episcopal bishops that urges our cities, states, and nation to adapt policies and

pass legislation that will reduce the number of Americans killed and wounded by gunfire. http://bishopsagainstgunviolence.org

Creating a Culture of Peace (CCP) is a nationwide program for community-based peacemaking. The innovative design of CCP provides a holistic and practical foundation in spiritually grounded active nonviolence. Participants come to recognize their own power for making personal and social changes without violence and improve their skills for respectful engagement with opponents, instead of confrontation that polarizes and demonizes. CCP training is an incubator for participants to raise issues that most concern them, such as group controversy and conflict, neighborhood violence, domestic violence, climate change, war and militarism, discrimination, video games, homelessness, peace education, and health care. www.creatingacultureofpeace.org

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF) is a national organization connecting all who seek a deliberate response to injustice and violence and want to pray, study, and take action for justice and peace in our communities, our church, and the world. We are called to do justice, dismantle violence, and strive to be peacemakers. EPF chapters are regionally based and work on local peace initiatives within their parish and communities as well as on national and international issues. They sponsor and cosponsor prayer and public witness such as peace vigils, liturgies, service projects, and demonstrations. http://epfnational.org

Episcopal Public Policy Network (EPPN) is a grassroots network of Episcopalians across the country dedicated to carrying out the Baptismal Covenant call to "strive for justice and peace" through the active ministry of public policy advocacy. The EPPN is a part of The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations located in Washington, DC. The actions, programs, and ministry of the Office of Government Relations are based entirely on policies approved by the church meeting in General Convention or by the Executive Council. The online EPPN action center is a tool kit for your faithful activism and community involvement, including information about your congressional representatives, templates for writing to them, and other information. http://advocacy.episcopalchurch.org/home

FaithTrust Institute is a national multifaith training and education organization that is working to end sexual and domestic violence. FaithTrust Institute provides faith communities and advocates with the tools and knowledge they need to address the faith and cultural issues related to abuse. www.cpsdv.org

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, a diverse coalition of denominations and faith-based organizations united by the call of their faiths to confront America's gun violence epidemic and to rally support for policies that reduce death and injury from gunfire, was formed on Martin Luther King Day, January 17, 2011. http://faithsagainstgunviolence.org

Institute for Peace and Justice is an independent, interfaith, not-for-profit organization in St. Louis that has focused on issues of peace and justice since 1970. With the development of **Families Against Violence Advocacy Network** (FAVAN) IPJ's advocacy priorities expanded to include gun violence, violence in the media, violence in schools, domestic violence, and children's voices. They have developed numerous curricula and programs for public schools and religious education programs. In addition to the Pledge of Nonviolence developed for families, schools, and churches, they publish a lectionary-based worship bulletin for children called "Peace Papers" that connect the Sunday readings to issues of peace and justice. www.ipj-ppj.org

Mayors Against Illegal Guns. In 2006, former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino founded Mayors Against Illegal Guns as a coalition of fifteen mayors. Since then, they have built a bipartisan group of more than one thousand current and former mayors from nearly every state to fight for commonsense gun laws. http://everytown.org/mayors/

Moms Demand Action. After the tragic shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, stay-at-home mom Shannon Watts decided to do something about it and channel what moms were feeling into a movement to stop everyday violence. What started as a single Facebook page has grown into a nationwide movement. In the past year, moms have taken on Starbucks for allowing customers to carry concealed, loaded guns in its stores—and won. They called on Facebook to crack down on illegal gun sales on its platform—and won. And they're calling on state and national lawmakers to enact commonsense gun laws that will protect our kids. http://everytown.org/moms/

National Episcopal Health Ministries (EHM) promotes health ministry in Episcopal congregations, assisting them to reclaim the gospel imperative of health and wholeness. Health ministry in a local congregation is an intentional ministry focusing on both healing and health, combining the ancient traditions of the Christian community and the knowledge and tools of modern health care. Part of their commitment is to reconciliation in a

broken and fragmented world, and to that end, their resource has numerous links related to health care issues, violence, and gun violence. www.episcopalhealthministries.org

StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on what bullying is, what cyber-bullying is, who is at risk, and how you can prevent and respond to bullying. www.stopbullying.gov

Gun Violence Resources

The Brady Campaign and the **Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence** have a long and rich history of inspired and strong leadership on gun violence prevention, championing the reduction of gun death and injury in America for forty years. In November 1993, the organization scored a major federal legislative victory with the passage and signing of the Brady Law that requires background checks on all gun sales made at federally licensed firearm dealers. www.bradycampaign.org

The Campaign to Stop Gun Violence is a coalition of national organizations that are willing to take a stand to let policymakers know that we can and *must* stop the flow of illegal guns into our communities. Campaign members join by signing a general Statement of Principles encompassing a variety of gun policy positions that the majority of Americans embrace. Campaign efforts and programs include: a) Fostering research and education about gun violence; b) Supporting grassroots efforts to prevent gun violence; c) Advocating for commonsense gun policies like universal background checks and enhanced screening and training for individuals who carry guns in public. http://campaigntostopgunviolence.org

Gun Violence in America Study Materials from Washington National Cathedral offers numerous short (2–3 minutes) video clips on topics that are key to the gun violence prevention debate and challenge. The clips are excerpts from the full panel discussions, which may also be viewed in their complete state on DVD that are available for purchase for use in small groups, churches, and community gatherings. Other documents include the Gun Sabbath Weekend Program and a variety of sermons and statements regarding gun violence. www.nationalcathedral.org/gunviolence

Gun Violence Prevention: Congregational Toolkit from the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship offers a Bible study, conversation

starters, worship resources, and other materials for congregations who wish to "Heed God's Call" for public witness. http://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/files/gunviolence/GVP%20Toolkit2.pdf

Gun Violence Prevention Curriculum from the Episcopal Peace Fellowship is a twenty-six-page booklet that serves as one way to raise awareness of gun violence as a spiritual and moral crisis and actively work toward achieving the peaceable kingdom. Five lesson plans (Guns in the U.S. Today, Gun Violence 101, Illegal Sales, Suicide, Supporting Those Who Grieve) for adult study are included, as well as worship materials. http://epfnational/what-about-guns

The Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend brings together people of faith—clergy, public leaders, advocates, victims, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters—to explore how our faith inspires action toward commonsense solutions to help end the gun violence epidemic in America. A special project of Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence and Washington National Cathedral, it began in 2013. Since then nearly one thousand places of worship in forty-six states and the District of Columbia have participated in the weekend that involves prayer, song, vigils, and education. http://marchsabbath.org. Download a process of how you can also hold a Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath http://www.nationalcathedral.org/pdfs/SabbathToolkitWNC201303.pdf