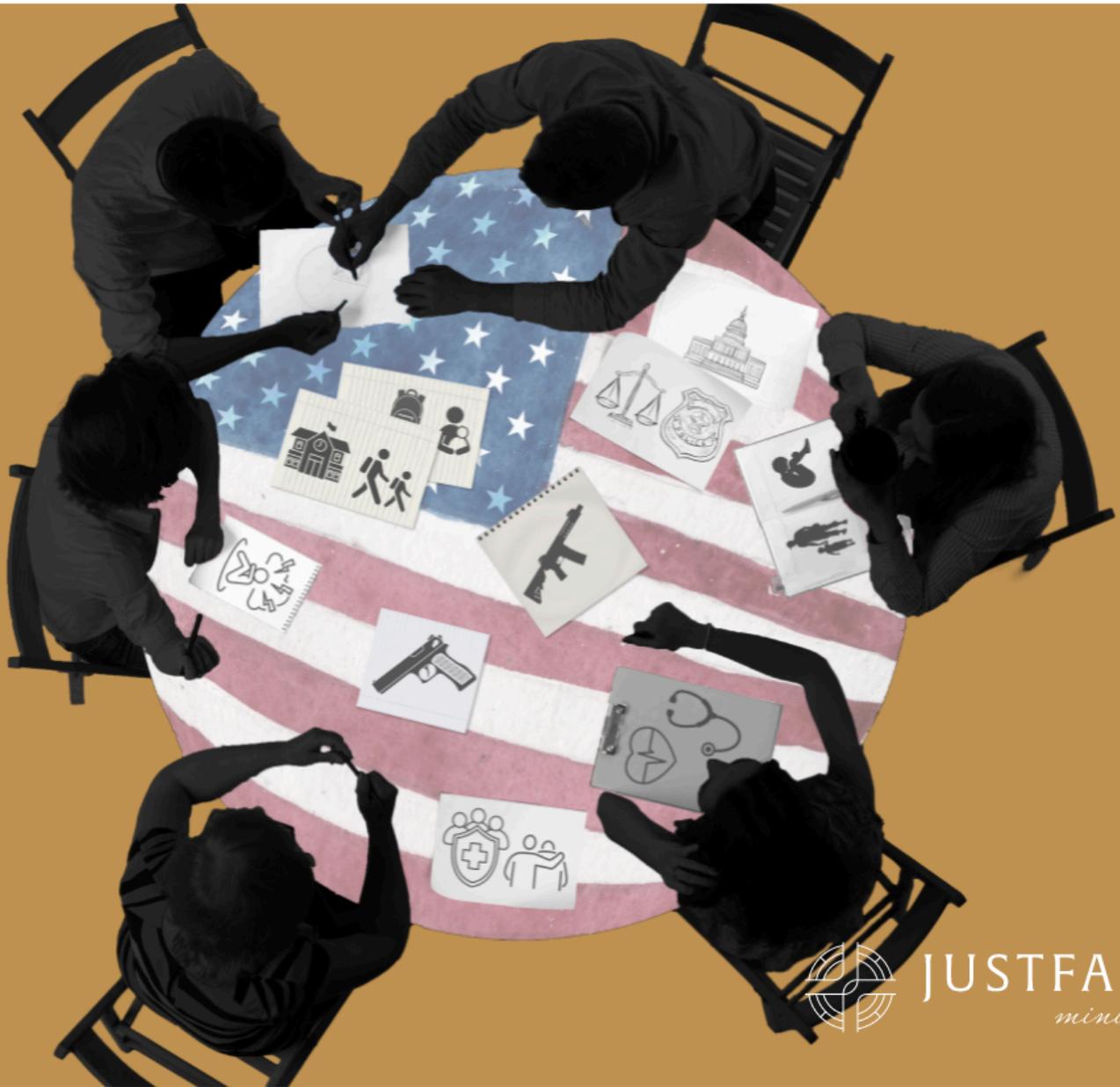


Preventing Gun Violence

FROM RHETORIC TO REAL SOLUTIONS



 JUSTFAITH
ministries

PARTICIPANT PACKET

For Virtual Groups



JUSTFAITH

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INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

Please read prior to Session 2

Note: This Participant Packet contains everything you will need for this program. Please bring it with you to all sessions. You can either print it out or pull it up on a digital device.

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

Preventing Gun Violence: From Rhetoric to Real Solutions inspires and equips small groups to reduce and prevent gun violence in their churches, families, and local areas. Over the course of eight two-hour sessions and an immersion experience, *Preventing Gun Violence* will transform a collection of individuals into a community of trust. You and your group will accompany one another in confronting the devastating reality of gun violence as you engage in holy dialogue across differences and discern how your faith calls you to respond. Together, your group will explore data-driven research around gun violence in America; encounter stories, poetry, and art from gun violence survivors, faith leaders, and activists; engage in spiritual practices to help process this emotionally-difficult topic; and receive practical tools for gun violence prevention. During the final session, your group will be guided in creating an achievable step-by-step plan for taking action after the program is finished.

WHO IS THIS PROGRAM FOR?

Americans are divided on many of today's most pressing issues. Grounded in Christian faith, this program aspires to move beyond the divisive rhetoric of gun ownership versus gun control, instead inviting participants to discern solutions to the gun violence epidemic. This program is for Christians across denominations who are committed to ending gun violence – gun owners and non-gun owners alike.

WHAT TO EXPECT (AND NOT EXPECT)

As described above, *Preventing Gun Violence* invites people with a diversity of perspectives to the same table. In so doing, this program is an opportunity to see God's image in someone with whom you vehemently disagree. Though it may sound small, encountering the image of God in the Other is a profoundly sacred practice that is not only foundational to creating change together, but also to witnessing the Living Christ in our world.



That said, you can also expect to feel frustrated, angry, and disappointed at times during your collective journey. Beloved Community is beautiful, but it is also hard work! Your group will not agree with one another – or with the program materials – one hundred percent of the time. Exploring different perspectives, even when we do not agree with them, can help us uncover new and important dimensions we never would have noticed otherwise. These across-the-aisle relationships can also prepare us to work alongside others who think differently than we do, so that together we can effect greater change around mutual priorities. After all, our current approach of working separately is not working. We need each other’s knowledge, skills, and resources: Democrats need Republicans, and vice versa. Non gun-owners need to talk to gun-owners, and vice versa. Together, we can amass the skills, resources, and people power we need to work together to build communities that are safe for everyone.

That said, if you are offering this program in your church or community with the hope of changing others’ views on this topic, you will likely find that this program falls short of your expectations. While we anticipate that *Preventing Gun Violence* will guide *all* participants in encountering new perspectives, this eight-to-ten-week program is not likely to override the lifetime of complex, emotion-packed experiences that have led participants to their current views about guns. It can be deeply painful — traumatic, even, under some circumstances — to listen to a perspective you find offensive or extremely harmful. For this reason, it will be important to reflect upon two questions: First, when it comes to engaging in challenging conversations around gun violence, are there boundaries you need to draw to protect your own spiritual or emotional well-being? If so, it may be helpful to articulate them to your group and/or co-facilitators ahead of time, so that you can explore ways to honor both your needs and the needs of the group. Second, are you prepared to be in relationship with people who have very different opinions on this topic? If the answer is “no,” that’s okay! You have a place within the movement to stop gun violence, regardless of whether you choose to participate in this particular opportunity.

OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

Session 1: Beloved Community: In addition to providing space for your group to get to know each other, this session lays the theological groundwork on which the rest of the program will be built: it is only through nonviolence – the way of Jesus, as described through the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – that we can sow peace.



Session 2: Types of Gun Violence in America: While mass shootings capture most of our national attention, 99% of gun violence does not occur through mass shootings. This session diagnoses America's illness so that you can discern how you and your group can use your unique gifts, talents and resources for the healing of your community and our nation.

Session 3: Race, Gender, and Gun Violence: There is a LOT to say about the intersections among gun violence, race, and gender. While this session won't cover everything, it WILL introduce two questions: 1. Why does gun violence impact certain racial and gender demographics differently than it impacts others? And 2. How can we work in solidarity with one another across differences? Your group will continue to explore these questions throughout the remainder of the program (and beyond).

Session 4: Trauma and Suicide Prevention: This session explores the connections between trauma and gun violence. Your group will learn practical tools for preventing suicide in their families, churches, and communities.

Session 5: Fear of the Other (guest speaker): After hearing from a guest speaker, your group will discuss how fear perpetuates a culture of violence and discern practical ways to cast out fear through love.

Session 6: Creating a Crisis Prevention Plan: Your group will learn simple ways to intervene before a crisis begins and create a plan for doing so in their churches, workplaces, or other settings. Alternatively, your group may choose to learn strategies for de-escalating conflict that could lead to harm of self or others.

Immersion Experience: The immersion is a real-world experience that will guide your group in discerning how you can put your learning into action. See more information below.

Session 7: Preventing Gun Violence through Public Policy: How can we advocate for policies that prevent gun violence? Your group will explore three policy solutions popular among gun owners and non-gun owners alike.

Session 8: Action: This session will invite you to commit to two action steps: one individual and one collective.

PROGRAM GOALS



- Learn how our Christian faith calls us to respond to the reality of gun violence in our local communities.
- Learn strategies for preventing gun violence in all the institutions, churches, and all networks of which we are a part.
- Learn practical tools for advocacy, in order to create policies that reduce gun violence in our communities and nation.
- Transform a collection of 8-14 individuals (8-12 for virtual groups) into a *community* of love and support. The members of your community will continue to encourage one another as you seek spiritual transformation and take action for justice after the program has finished.

WHAT TO BRING TO EACH SESSION

- Participant Packet (print or have pulled up on your computer or tablet)
- A Bible (or a trusted Bible app or website)
- A journal and pen (or you can pull up a blank Word or Google document)
- *The Violence Project: How to Stop a Mass Shooting Epidemic*, as well as any supplemental resources you read for "homework." (Contact your facilitator to find out how your group will be purchasing the book).
- A candle and matches
- A cross or another symbol that is meaningful to you

VIRTUAL MEETING NORMS

- Because a primary aspect of our programs is building a community of trust, all participants who have webcams are expected to turn on their video for the meetings.
- Lighting is important. If you can, sit facing a big window. If you don't have access to a window, place a lamp in front of you. Make sure the light source is in front of you, not behind you, so you don't get accidentally silhouetted.



- Control your background. Be mindful of what is in your background. Pick an area without a ton of distractions.
- Position the camera right. Ideally, you want the camera to be straight on or slightly above you, pointing downward.
- Find a quiet space. Find a quiet space to conduct the call. Keep in mind that your headphones might have a better mic than your computer. Test out your audio to find the one that sounds clearest.
- Even in a quiet space, unexpected distractions often take place. Please remain on “mute” unless you are speaking.
- Remain engaged. Please refrain from multitasking.
- If you are in a situation where noise or other distractions, or the need to leave the session briefly are unavoidable, please put yourself on mute and turn off the video. This will help others stay focused.

PRAYER

The call to a quiet, reflective, prayerful space is an integral part of all JustFaith Ministries programs. Each session includes an opening and closing time of guided prayer. In the beginning of each session, prayer provides a transition from your daily routine into a place of deep listening, vulnerability, and sharing. At the end of each session, prayer provides a transition into our daily lives, as we take the spiritual guidance we have received in the session and incorporate it into the ways we live, work, and act.

We recommend that you turn your work area into a sacred space. Consider placing a candle and matches next to your computer. Your facilitator will invite you to light your candle at the beginning of each session (just be sure not to forget to extinguish the candle!). You might also consider bringing a cross or another symbol that is meaningful to you, which you can lay next to your computer as a reminder of God’s presence.

CREATING A BRAVE SPACE

As articulated in the poem below, JustFaith Ministries programs foster a brave space, rather than a safe space, for conversation and learning. The intention of this program is to inspire



action to address root causes of injustice while serving with love. Though we anticipate participants will experience the liberation and community that accompany justice formation and action, this program is not designed to facilitate group therapy or heal trauma. We highly encourage facilitators to attend facilitation trainings (including an anti-racist facilitation training), but most facilitators are volunteers — not professionals — who will be learning alongside your group.

Also, fellow group members will be working through their own assumptions and biases and may express views you find hurtful or uninformed. When this occurs, care for yourself by taking a deep breath and noticing the emotions that arise within you. Take a break from the conversation if necessary: simply let the group know that you need to step out of the room or away from your computer for a moment. If you feel comfortable doing so, share your own perspective while following the group guidelines; however, know it is not your responsibility to fix or save anyone else. After the session is over, consider scheduling an appointment with a counselor, therapist, or spiritual leader, who can accompany you in processing the experience and discerning a way forward.

Before entering into your group's first gathering, journal and pray about the following questions:

- Why have you chosen to embark on this journey in the context of community, rather than as an individual?
- What are the risks of stepping into this brave space? What hardships might you encounter, and how do you plan to respond?

The Brave Ones

We gather, we brave ones,
to create courageous community.
Clumsily, we dance our dialogue
and lean into discomfort.
There is no safety here.

Uncomfortable tongues
speak truths of harm done.
As we reflect and learn,
we'll receive words we'd like to return
and say things we wish to unsay.
We wound and are wounded.



And yet.....

We choose love over hate
We choose to connect instead of isolate
We choose to expand rather than shrink and disappear.

Our community will be flawed,
But perfection is not our goal.
Together, we find collective liberation
in our mutual growth.

So when you feel angry and afraid
(because you will),
Stop. And take a deep breath:
Inhale courage.
Exhale fear.
Feel the sacred presence in your breath
and in the holy yet human connection between us.

– Adapted from “We Brave Ones”
by Davelyn Hill,
Executive Director of Speaking Down Barriers
Speakdownbarriers.org

ABOUT THE READINGS AND RESOURCES

The books and resources we have chosen are intended to invite you in exploring how your faith calls you to respond to the reality of gun violence. This exploration will necessarily entail considering perspectives different from your own – for this reason, we have sought to include stories, poetry, videos, and articles from authors and artists from a variety backgrounds. Our intention is not to encourage participants to take on the authors’ worldviews as their own; rather, our hope is that your mind and heart will be opened to new and important perspectives.



- ***The Violence Project* by James Densley and Jillian Peterson:** “Frustrated by reactionary policy conversations that never seemed to convert into meaningful action, special investigator and psychologist Jill Peterson and sociologist James Densley built *The Violence Project*, the first comprehensive database of mass shooters. Their goal was to establish the root causes of mass shootings and figure out how to stop them by examining hundreds of data points in the life histories of more than 170 mass shooters—from their childhood and adolescence to their mental health and motives.” Though *The Violence Project* primarily focuses on mass shootings, it provides important suggestions for how we can prevent other forms of gun violence as well, which will be explored in more depth through accompanying resources and during each session.
- **A diverse assortment of articles, podcasts, and videos:** In addition to *The Violence Project*, your weekly preparation assignments will include a wide variety of additional resources by a diversity of authors, artists and activists. Formats include podcasts, articles, videos, poetry, songs, and stories. These resources will introduce you to new perspectives and fuel in-session dialogue.

On average, it will likely take about an hour and a half to complete the preparation assignments. Some weeks you will need more time; some, you will need less. We have spent a lot of time carefully selecting readings we think will be the most useful throughout a lifetime of seeking justice, peace, and healing. Although your group will not always have time for lengthy conversations around every weekly assignment, the readings and spiritual practices lay the groundwork for in-session conversations, activities, and action planning. The weekly preparation assignments can be found at the beginning of each session.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT PREVENTING GUN VIOLENCE:

- ***Preventing Gun Violence* embraces multiple solutions.** The data is clear: “mass shootings happen most often where there’s access to guns,” writes Toni Jensen in her memoir *Carry*. At the same time, there are more guns in America than there are people; no matter how effective our organizing strategies, pervasive gun access won’t end tomorrow. As we work for common sense gun laws and find better ways to enforce them, we must simultaneously embrace other solutions, such as safe storage, checking on people entering our churches and other institutions; addressing fear, racism, and



hatred; and improving our public health systems. Political ideologies promote single solutions; however, if we want to stop gun violence, we must think holistically.

- ***Preventing Gun Violence* reflects JustFaith Ministries’ commitment to racial justice.** Though we believe the tools offered in this program will be relevant to people across the political and theological spectrum, it is important that prospective participants be aware of JustFaith Ministries’ commitment to justice, particularly anti-racism.¹
- ***Preventing Gun Violence* requires that participants attend sessions regularly.** Because the sessions build on each other, it can be difficult to get caught up if you must miss a session. Be sure to check in with your facilitator if you are unable to attend a session.
- ***Preventing Gun Violence* requires that everyone complete the weekly assignments** (*especially* the spiritual practice!). It is completely understandable that other life responsibilities must take precedence over completing the weekly assignments. However, we have time and time again found that attempting to participate in in-session activities without having completed the assignments is not only unhelpful for the individual, but it also impacts the experience of others in the group. For this reason, if you have not had a chance to complete the weekly assignments, follow these instructions:
 - Attend the session, but spend most of the time listening.
 - Let the group know at the beginning of the session that you have not completed the reading. Be honest, and your group will understand — we’ve all been there!
 - Catch up on the reading and spiritual practice the following week.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We want to get this program right, and we hope that you will help us continually revise this program so that it can be the best it can be. JustFaith has a survey for you to complete at the end of the program – it should not take more than fifteen minutes. You can find the link to this

¹ Here is how we define Anti-Racism: “When we choose to be Anti-Racist, we become actively conscious about race and racism and take actions to end racial inequities (individual, systemic, and structural) in our daily lives. Being Anti-Racist is believing that racism is everyone’s problem, and we all have a role to play in stopping it.” (National Museum of American History & Culture)



survey in the post-program assignments on the last page of this Participant Packet. Thanks in advance for your input!

ABOUT JUSTFAITH MINISTRIES

Overview

JustFaith Ministries (JFM) is a nonprofit organization that serves the work of justice, community-building and reconciliation by creating small-group educational programs that transform hearts, deepen commitment, inspire engagement and equip for action. Over 70,000 people across the country have participated in JFM programs! Our work is crafted and customized for both those who belong to a Christian community as well as those who approach the work of justice from a more broadly spiritual perspective.

Programs for Christian Communities

JustFaith Ministries has a long history of serving churches and small faith communities to empower and expand their work on behalf of justice. Drawing from the heart of the Gospel, our faith-based programming allows participants to explore the intersection of faith and social mission, study an important issue intensively, build community, and discern next steps (faith-in-action). These small group programs include:

- JustFaith Series: this series explores the Gospel's call to respond to poverty, equipping participants to take action in a way that is effective, sustainable, and reflective of their Christian vision. The ecumenical version of this series (JustFaith) consists of three 8-session programs, while JustFaith Catholic comprises four.
- Racial Justice Series:
 - Faith and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege
 - Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration
 - Faith and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structures
- Eco-justice Series:
 - Sacred Land: Food and Farming
 - Sacred Air: Climate and Energy
 - Sacred Water: Oceans and Ecosystems
- Youth for Justice: Invites youth to explore contemporary social issues through the lens of the Christian tradition.
- Faith and Immigration Justice
- Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice
- Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times
- The Land Is Not Our Own: Seeking Repair Alongside Indigenous Communities



- Preventing Gun Violence: From Rhetoric to Real Solutions

Programs for Broader Audiences

JustFaith Ministries also offers programs that are designed for broader audiences that may not define themselves as religious. Those who are unaffiliated with a church or religious tradition or who identify as “spiritual but not religious” will find these programs relevant and meaningful. These programs may also resonate with an interfaith audience. These programs include:

- Spirituality and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege
- Spirituality and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice, and Restoration
- Spirituality and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structures
- Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times

Impact

The best testimony to our work are the outcomes: JustFaith participant involvement in justice and social ministry is vast. Participants report bringing more affordable housing opportunities to their communities; reforming the criminal justice system; advocating for hunger relief at the local, national and international levels; standing in solidarity with our immigrant siblings; becoming ambassadors for Fair Trade and micro-businesses; engaging in anti-racism efforts; advocating for the end of the death penalty; working for sensible gun laws; and many other commitments. The true measure of our work is what happens after the programs are done!

Welcome

Welcome to the JFM community! We can't do this without each other. We are honored to walk alongside you in advancing peace, racial equity, economic justice and a sustainable world, and we hope that you will find as much love and liberation along this journey as we have. Please keep in touch: let us know how your life has been transformed, the ways you are taking action for justice, and how we can best support you in your spiritual growth and work for justice. Most of all, know that we, the JustFaith Ministries staff, are holding you in our hearts and praying for you throughout your journey.

JOIN THE JUSTFAITH NETWORK

The ultimate goal of this program — and all our JustFaith Ministries programs — is to invite participants into a deeper commitment to the work of love and justice. To support program graduates, we created the JustFaith Network to provide lively and current resources that can



sustain you spiritually and equip you with the tools you need for your work to be effective. By joining the Network, you will have access to reflections, small group guided conversations, speaker events, blogs, best practices, and an expanding list of items.

The JustFaith Network is free and open to anyone. You can sign up at:

<https://justfaith.org/get-involved/justfaith-network>

SUPPORT JUSTFAITH MINISTRIES – AND INSPIRE MORE PEOPLE TO WORK FOR JUSTICE

JustFaith Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. We rely on donations from graduates like you to help us create and distribute our high-quality programs. We hope you consider making a donation, and joining with us in building a more just, peaceful, and equitable world. To learn about ways you can donate (online; by check; through an IRA, donor-advised fund; and more), visit: <https://justfaith.org/donate>

SPECIAL THANKS!

Preventing Gun Violence: From Rhetoric to Real Solutions was made possible through generous support from program graduate and facilitator Perry Gilreath, who partnered with us to bring this program to fruition. We give thanks for Perry's contribution and celebrate her lifelong commitment to peace, equity, and justice.

Thank you to St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Colorado Springs for piloting this program in their congregation and providing crucial feedback. We are especially grateful for the leadership of pilot group facilitators Jon Numair, Rev. Vicki Hesse, and Linda Page, as well as Rev. Matt Holcombe.

Thanks to our partner, [Bread for the World](#), who supported JustFaith Ministries in the creation of this and all of our programs.

Thank you to David Galvan, who provided key guidance around suicide prevention. David is a trainer at Soul Shop, whose mission is to equip faith community leaders and congregations to minister to those impacted by suicide. They host practical workshops for youth, clergy, laypeople, and campus ministers. To learn more about bringing Soul Shop to your community or church, visit their website: <https://www.soulshopmovement.org/>



Thank you to Rev. Dr. Elaine Nocks, who edited this program and provided spiritual support.

Thank you to Brady United, who partnered with us to create this program. We are grateful for their insight and feedback, as well as the important work they are doing across the country to end gun violence. We strongly encourage graduates of this program to connect with their local Brady chapters or start their own. Find out more here: <https://www.bradyunited.org/>





PREPARATION FOR SESSION 1

- Save this packet to your desktop or another accessible location. You will need it for Session 1.
- Read the [Introductory Materials](#) section of this Participant Packet. This is important for both facilitators and participants – please do not skip it!
- Gather the items you will need for each session. They are listed under the “[What to Bring to Each Session](#)” heading of the Introductory Materials section of this packet.
- Read [Session 1 Attachment B: Community of Trust Guidelines](#)

About the first session...

The title of Session 1 is “Beloved Community,” a term coined by theologian Josiah Royce and popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For King, the Beloved Community, which reflects the Kingdom of God, was a realistic, achievable global vision in which the power of nonviolence and “agape” love would eradicate poverty, racism, and militarism.

In addition to providing space for participants to get to know each other, this first session will lay the theological groundwork on which the rest of the program will be built: it is only through nonviolence – the way of Jesus – that we can sow peace.



Session 1 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Scripture Reading

Reader 1: A reading from Revelation 7:9-17, a vision of the Kin-dom of Heaven:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

Reader 2: Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

I answered, “O Lord, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne
will shelter them with his presence.



'Never again will they hunger;
 never again will they thirst.
 The sun will not beat down on them,
 nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb at the center of the throne
 will be their shepherd;
 'he will lead them to springs of living water.'
 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

Let us pause for silent reflection.

Meditation

Reader 1: There are a thousand places I can go with twelve other people that I can't go by myself.

Reader 2: I learned this from Jesus, who gathered and walked with twelve other people to go places he couldn't, or didn't want to, go by himself.

Reader 1: A few years ago, I went to Haiti with twelve other people.

Reader 2: *Without* them, I would not have gone.

Reader 1: *Without* them, I would not have opened my eyes.

Reader 2: *Without* them, I would have curled up in despair.

Reader 1: *With* them, I cried, held hope, even found some way to laugh.

Reader 2: *With* them, I found the resolve to return.

Reader 1: *With* them, I found the courage to embrace wounds I thought I could not hold.

Reader 2: Where does courage come from? (pause)



It does not come from me. (pause)

It comes from you. (pause)

It comes from the holy, powerful presence that stands ready between us.

Reader 1: This is why we do not travel alone.

Reader 2: Amen.



Session 1 Attachment B: Community of Trust Guidelines

Adapted by Anne and Tom Johnson from:

- *Circle of Trust® Touchstones* developed by Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal www.couragerenewal.org (primary source)
- *JustFaith Group Guidelines* www.JustFaith.org

1. **Give and receive welcome.** People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this community, we support each other's learning by giving and receiving welcome.
2. **Be as fully present as possible.** Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings, as well as your convictions, joys, and successes, your listening as well as your speaking. Listen intently in order to fully understand different points of view. Honor the space between "no longer" and "not yet."
3. **What is offered in our community is by invitation, not demand.** Share what your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Commit to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak. Invite others to speak before speaking again.
4. **Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.** Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in our community does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Knowing that we are each created uniquely, and have different backgrounds, experiences, and views, we commit to honoring differences, knowing they add to the richness of the community's experience.
5. **No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting.** This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.
6. **Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions....** Instead of counsel or corrections. With such questions, we help "hear each other into deeper speech." Commit to respectfully seeking clarification of others' perspectives to add to our understanding.



7. **When the going gets tough, turn to wonder.** If you feel judgmental or defensive, ask yourself:
 - “I wonder what brought her to this belief?”
 - “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”
 - “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?”Set aside judgment to listen to others — and to yourself — more deeply.
8. **Attend to your own inner teacher.** We learn from others, of course. But as we explore prayer, readings, questions, and silence, as well as engage with people both inside and outside our community, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, which are your most important teacher.
9. **Trust and learn from the silence.** Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.
10. **Observe deep confidentiality.** Our community of trust depends on knowing that whatever we say will remain with the people to whom we choose to say it — whether in small groups or in the large circle — and will never be passed on to others without our explicit permission.
11. **This is a brave space.** We will hear hard stories, have tough conversations, and wrestle with our own biases and assumptions. We embrace both the boldness and the risk of this community.²
12. **We are all learners; there are no instructors here.** Do not expect those most affected by injustice to teach the rest of the group, or answer first, or speak on behalf of an entire community or demographic. For example, people of color should not be expected to teach White participants about race.
13. **Notice the log in your own eye,** rather than the speck in your neighbor’s. It is easier to talk about a misguided politician, close-minded family member, or ignorant coworker

² Though we anticipate participants will experience the liberation and community that accompany justice formation and action, this program is not designed to facilitate group therapy or heal trauma. You can read more about the difference between a brave space and a safe space in the Introductory Materials in the Participant Packet.



than it is to do the deep spiritual work of recognizing our own part in unjust systems and imagining ways to seek accountability, repair, and healing.

14. **Know that it's possible** to leave a meeting of our community with whatever it was you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.



Session 1 Attachment C: Violence and Nonviolence

Violence: *Violence is emotional, verbal, or physical behavior that dominates, diminishes, or destroys ourselves or others. Violence crosses boundaries without permission, disrupts authentic relationships and separates us from other beings.*

(Definition adapted from From Violence to Wholeness, Ken Butigan, Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Center, 1999)

In Scripture, the Hebrew word for violence, *hamas*, often refers to physical violence, but it also indicates both verbal and structural violence (such as the mistreatment of immigrants, women, or those experiencing poverty — and the way these things are built into our institutions and systems).

Reflection Questions On Violence:

- What are your initial reactions to these definitions? How do they shed light on the way violence shows up in your own life or community?
- When we think of the word “violence,” physical combat and guns might be two images that first come to mind. Aside from physical violence, what are some other ways violence manifests itself?
- How do these definitions relate to our call to Beloved Community?

Martin Luther King Jr.’s Principles of Nonviolence³

1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.

- It is active nonviolent resistance to evil.
- It is assertive spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.
- It is always persuading the opponent of the justice of your cause.

³ These principles are drawn from King’s writings, which include: “Nonviolence and Racial Justice,” (1957), “The Most Durable Power,” (1956), and “An Experiment in Love.”



2. Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.

- Nonviolence does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent.
- The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation.
- The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community.⁴

3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.

- Nonviolence attacks forces of evil, rather than the people doing the evil.
- Nonviolence holds that evildoers are also victims.

4. Nonviolence avoids both physical violence and violence of the spirit.

- At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of *agape* love.
- Nonviolent love is active, not passive.
- Nonviolent love does not sink to the level of the hater.
- Love for the enemy is how we demonstrate love for ourselves.
- Love restores community and resists injustice.
- Nonviolence recognizes the fact that all life is interrelated.

5. Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

- The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win.

Reflection Questions on Nonviolence

- How might these principles guide us in our efforts to prevent gun violence?
- Do the principles of nonviolence affect or change your thinking about gun violence?
- There is overlap between King's principles of nonviolence and the Community of Trust Guidelines. How would you like to consciously practice nonviolence in the way you interact with people both within and outside this group?

⁴ “[Beloved Community](#)” is a term coined by theologian Josiah Royce and popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For King, the Beloved Community, which reflects the Kingdom of God, was a realistic, achievable global vision in which the power of nonviolence and “agape” love would eradicate poverty, racism, and militarism.



Session 1 Attachment D: Closing Meditation

All: Blessed be the tie that binds —

Reader 1: The word *perichoresis* describes the mutual indwelling of the members of the Holy Trinity. Though each member is distinct and different from the other, they are inseparable and overlapping. Made in the image of God, we are called to be community as our God is community. There is no greater vocation or joy than this.

All: Our hearts in Christian love —

Reader 2: In ancient Greek, there are several words for love, including: *eros*, an aesthetic, romantic love; *philia*, or affection between friends; and *agape*, an overflowing love that is creative, unmotivated, and unconditional. *Agape* love does not distinguish between worthy and unworthy, friend or enemy; it refers to the love of God that binds humans together. To love without exception is the pinnacle of human maturity.

All: The fellowship of kindred minds —

Reader 3: "Be of one mind," the Apostle Paul advised the Philippian community, who were fraught with theological and cultural arguments. Was Paul promoting uniformity, that we should all act and think the same? "By no means!" he would say. Rather, we are called to work out our differences, celebrate the variability of human giftedness, and to become a community united not in sameness but in love.

All: Is like to that above —

Reader 4: Creating, Sustaining, and Redeeming God, make us one as you are one. When our differences seem insurmountable, grant us the persistence to bear with one another in love, forgiving one another as you have forgiven us (Eph 4:2). Bind us together with the love that comes only from you; we yearn to be the Beloved Community you have called us to be. Amen.



Session 1 Attachment E: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Session 1 is entitled “Beloved Community” because the Beloved Community should be seen as the North Star for faith-based efforts to end gun violence. Having a clear, shared vision of a world without gun violence is crucial for maintaining hope and faith, which are essential to fueling advocacy and action. **Consider hosting a summit or event at your church or local community center** to create space for participants to envision and discuss what a future without gun violence looks like. This vision will guide their efforts and inspire sustained commitment to the cause.

When planning the structure of the event, encourage participants to engage in storytelling and discussions about the Beloved Community and a future without gun violence. These conversations should help them:

- Reflect on what a peaceful, nonviolent community would look like.
- Share personal stories and experiences related to gun violence and nonviolence.
- Envision specific changes and actions that can contribute to building a world free of gun violence.

Recommendations for designing your summits or event on the Beloved Community and a future without gun violence:

1. Partner with Brady Chapters and Other Advocates:

- Collaborate with local Brady chapters, other gun violence prevention groups, community violence intervention advocates, and cultural healing leaders.
- Brady United has held several summits focused on building a future without gun violence. These events can serve as valuable examples for your own initiatives.
- Joint efforts can amplify the impact and reach of your initiatives.
- Email: chapters@bradyunited.org for support and partnership opportunities.

2. Utilize the Beloved Community as a Framework:

- Structure summits and meetings around the principles of the Beloved Community.
- Encourage participants to envision and discuss practical steps towards achieving a society without gun violence.



- Focus on creating actionable plans and fostering a sense of collective purpose and hope.

3. Incorporate Storytelling and Visioning Exercises:

- Use storytelling to connect participants on a personal level and highlight the real impacts of gun violence.
- Facilitate visioning exercises where participants imagine a peaceful future and brainstorm ways to achieve it.
- This approach helps ground the discussion in lived experiences and aspirations, making the vision more tangible and inspiring.



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 2

Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.

So when Jesus says "Love your enemies," he is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition. Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies—or else? The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars—must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation.

.... Jesus is eternally right. History is replete with the bleached bones of nations that refused to listen to him.

King Jr, Martin Luther. "Loving Your Enemies." *A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings* (p. 56). Beacon Press.

Reading:

- Read the Introductory Materials at the beginning of this Participant Packet if you have not already done so. This is important for both facilitators and participants – please do not skip it!
- Review the Session 1 Action Toolkit (Session 1 Attachment E), which suggests action steps you might take in response to what you learned in Session 1. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context.

During Session 8, you will commit to two action steps: one action you will take individually and one you will take with your group. However, it is important to engage in discernment throughout the course of the entire program; the Action Toolkits at the end of each session can help you to do so.

- *The Violence Project*: Chapters 1 and 2



- “Jesus’s Third Way” by Walter Wink:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ahcbAoy-yYrAeA25CUQYsAd2D1ZSIjFE/view?usp=sharing>
- Explore Gun Violence Archive:
 - Browse the main map:
<https://www.thetrace.org/2023/02/gun-violence-map-america-shootings/>
 - Read the explainer: <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/explainer>
 - Optional (these resources will not be discussed in-session):
 - Explore the Gun Violence Archive website in more detail:
<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>
 - Listen to The Daily’s “The Man Who Counts Every Shooting in America” (about the man behind The Gun Violence Archive):
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/18/podcasts/the-daily/gun-violence-archive.html>

Spiritual practice:

“LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.” — Psalm 30:2

Re-read the definitions of violence/nonviolence and King’s principles of nonviolence. Journal about your answers to the following questions:

- How has violence – in any of its forms – touched your life? From what do you need healing? After writing your answer, take a moment to pause, breathe, and allow God to carry the pain you are still holding.
- How have you participated in violence in any of its forms? For what do you need forgiveness? Are there any concrete steps you need to take in order to seek repair and restoration? After writing your answer, take a moment to pause, breathe, and receive God’s grace.
- Do you think that your experiences with violence have shaped your view of gun violence? (You will have the option to share your answers to this question in-session). After you are finished, close the meditation by resting silently in God’s presence for one full minute.

**About the next session....**

While mass shootings capture most of our national attention, 99% of gun violence does not occur through mass shootings. Session 2, entitled "Types of Gun Violence in America, will diagnose America's illness so that we can discern how to seek healing.



Session 2 Attachment A: Reading Dialogue

Instructions: You will have 25 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. Choose a facilitator to read the questions and facilitate the conversation.

You may not have time to get to all the questions, and that's okay. Also, if there are any questions that particularly interest your group, prioritize those.

Choose one person from your small group to report 1-2 key insights from your small group's conversation to the large group when you reconvene.

Spiritual Practice

- How was your experience with the spiritual practice? What did you learn about yourself?
- Do you think that your experiences with violence have shaped your view of gun violence?

Walter Wink, "Jesus' Third Way"

- Wink offers three examples of Jesus' "third way." How do these examples inform your work to prevent gun violence? Or, do they give you any new ideas for how you might choose a "third way" in other areas of your life?
- Different churches and denominations emphasize different aspects of Jesus's identity: for some, Jesus is an all-powerful king; for others, he is a kind and gentle shepherd. How does Wink's article broaden your understanding of who Jesus is and what it means to follow his example?

The Violence Project, chapters 1 and 2

- *"[The fighting] has failed because the monsters are not them. They are us—boys and men we know. Our children. Our students. Our colleagues. Our community. They're walking in and out of the same secure doors we are, past the same armed guards every day, like the rest of us. They're standing next to us when we rehearse for the next shooting. They're reading and watching the same media stories we are. They are not outsiders. They are insiders" (p. 3).*



- How does this statement challenge the way you think about gun violence and the steps you can take to prevent it?
- *We are not helpless. We don't have to accept the unacceptable. As individuals, as institutions, and as a country, we can break the cycle of violence... because the power to change lives and the course of history in our schools, workplaces, and communities lies with us" (p. 18).*
 - What is your reaction to this statement? Do you believe the authors' assertion that that change is truly possible, and that we are capable of making the change we wish to see? If so, who or what gives you hope?
- In chapter 2, the authors explain potential reasons why mass shootings happen more often in America. Their first reason is this: "First, America was built on violence and has always been tolerant of it" (p. 22). What do you think about this statement? Has America's history of violence contributed to a present-day culture that accepts violence as "normal"? If so, what are some examples?
- *"[American individualism] affords people undue credit for personal successes and undue blame for personal failures. By its very nature, therefore, individualism exacerbates the sense of injustice that anyone aggrieved feels. If an American, especially a white man born with all the advantages conferred by race and gender, can't make it here, it's his own fault. In America, if you work hard, you are entitled to your success. At least, that's the myth" (p. 23).*
 - Do the pressures of American individualism affect your own life? If so, how?
 - How do you think individualism has shaped the way we live and what we believe about ourselves and others?
 - How do the lifestyle choices and beliefs you identified in the question above align or conflict with the teachings of Jesus?



Session 2 Attachment B: A Lament in the Face of Gun Violence

Adapted from Brady's "Types of Gun Violence in America"⁵

Facilitator: Together, let us pray.

Reader 1: *Almost every day we hear of another mass shooting in our country. But America's gun violence epidemic is made up of much more than high-profile media events.*

Reader 2: We pray for those whose cries have been silenced or ignored. May we seek out their stories and walk alongside them in seeking justice, peace, and healing. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader 1: *Every 16 hours, a woman in America is shot and killed by a current or former intimate partner.*

Reader 2: We pray for those who are abused, that they may find refuge. May they know that they are your children of immeasurable worth. We pray also for abusers, that they may find the healing and support necessary to overcome violence. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader 1: *Suicides account for 60 percent of all gun deaths.*

Reader 2: We pray for those overwhelmed by darkness, that they may see the light of God's love and know that they are not alone. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader 1: *There are communities across the country, many of them Black and Brown, where gun violence linked to decades of oppressive policies, is an everyday*

⁵ <https://www.bradyunited.org/issue/types-of-gun-violence>



reality. Imagine trying to live, work, and play in a community awash with easily obtainable weapons.

Reader 2: Open our eyes, O God, to the policies and practices that oppress our siblings – for many of us, these patterns have become so “normal” that we are unable or unwilling to see them. Give us the courage to tear down racial injustice and work with our neighbors to build your Kin-dom in its place.

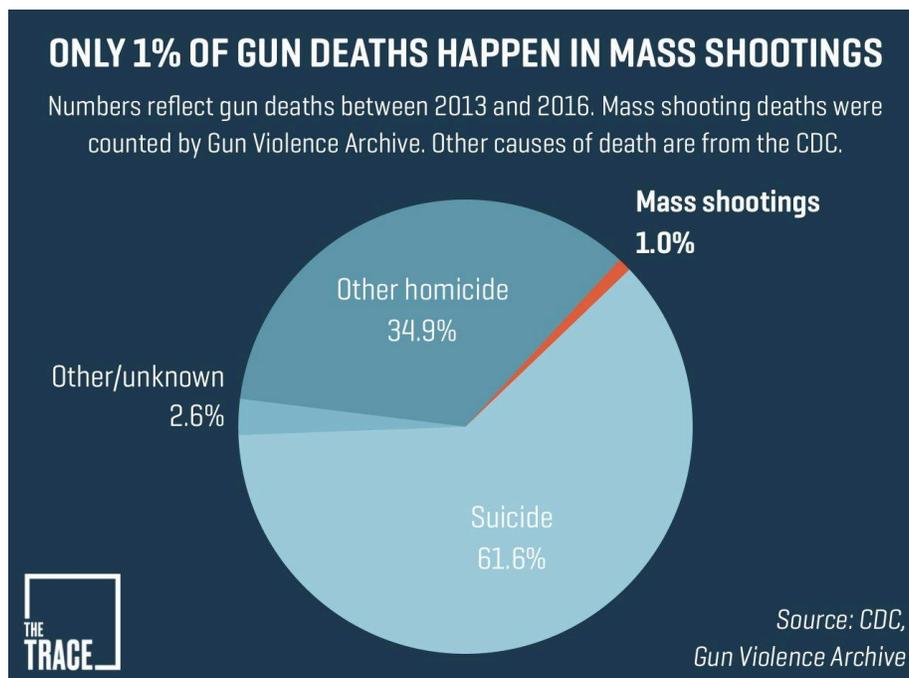
All: Hear our prayer, loving God, and make us instruments of your peace. Amen.



Session 2 Attachment C: Gun Violence in America

Data compiled by Hannah N. Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Gun violence in America extends far beyond mass shootings, representing a multifaceted public health crisis that affects diverse communities and demographics.



Key Statistics (2021 Data)

- Total Gun Deaths: 48,830 (highest on record).
 - Homicides: 20,958
 - Suicides: 26,328

Gun Violence as the Leading Cause of Death for Children and Teens

- Children and Teens (Ages 1-19):
 - Gun violence is the number one cause of death for children and teenagers in the United States, surpassing car accidents and other injuries.



- Among child and teen gun deaths, 64% were homicides and 30% were suicides.
- Racial Disparities: Black children and teens are disproportionately affected, with gun violence accounting for 51% of deaths among Black teens aged 15-19 ([The Hub](#)) (JHSPH).
- **Take action! Participate in the ASK Campaign:**
<https://www.bradyunited.org/programs/end-family-fire/ask-to-end-family-fire>

Demographic Impact on Black Americans⁶

- Young Black males (15-34) accounted for 36% of gun homicides but only 2% of the population.
- Young Black females had a firearm homicide rate nine times higher than White females in the same age group.
- Black Americans are nearly 14 times more likely to die by gun homicide compared to White counterparts.

Gun Violence as a Social and Public Health Issue

- **Public health** refers to the science and practice of protecting and improving the health of communities through education, promotion of healthy behaviors, and prevention of injuries and diseases. Gun violence is a public health issue, affecting large populations and transcending individual incidents.
 - Two ways to address a public health issue include:
 - **Prevention Focus:** Prioritizes preventive measures to address root causes and reduce occurrences.
 - **Systemic Approach:** Considers social, economic, and environmental factors influencing health.
- **Structural Inequities:** Rates of gun violence mirror existing socio-economic disparities.

⁶ <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-01/2023-june-cgvs-u-s-gun-violence-in-2021-v3.pdf>



- **Community Impact:** Gun violence not only causes fear, mistrust, and insecurity within communities, but it also contributes to healthcare disparities, economic instability, and weakened community cohesion.



Session 2 Attachment D: Closing Meditation

- Reader 1: We were told as children that this was the greatest country in the world. We thought it true. How lucky we were to have been born in the land of the free. Yes, we noticed as we got older that there were protests and violence. Yes, there were shootings and killings. Yes, there were wars. But it was good being in the greatest country.
- Reader 2: But, if we begin to poke around a bit, maybe travel to other places, or speak to people who come from other places, or maybe even notice statistics, it makes you wonder. 48,000 gun deaths in 2022 in the greatest country in the world (12/100,000). 875 gun deaths in 2022 in Canada (2/100,000). In America, there are 120 guns for every 100 people. In England, there are five. What? . . .
- Reader 1: And, so it goes. And we wake up one day and realize that you and I live in a sea of violence. We are like fish breathing in an ocean of images of violence, tools of violence, games of violence, words of violence, politics of violence. And guns for all: guns for fun, guns for fear, guns for everyone.
- Reader 2: So, the prayer we pray is, how do we escape? How do we heal? How do we usher in a new possibility, a new kingdom, a new earth, a new way?
- Reader 1: How, O God, do we change? How?
- Facilitator: Let us pause for silent reflection. *Pause for 30 seconds.***
- Reader 1: How, O God, do we change? How?
- Reader 2: Here's how: There was a middle-aged woman who was generally satisfied with her life. She was invited by a friend to spend an afternoon organizing some canned foods at a food bank. She wasn't excited, but she went. Five years later, she was the Executive Director of a state-wide advocacy group for low-income household nutrition, admired widely for her effective and impactful work.
- Reader 1: So, it's that easy?



- Reader 2: Well, perhaps. The point is to start. Every action, every choice, leads to new wisdom, new experience, new possibilities. If you do anything, you'll be different. Every choice you make might yield insights and passions that you never knew existed. Each step leads to another.
- Reader 1: I might change?
- Reader 2: You WILL change. The gift you give to the world when you make a choice to do anything is the near-guarantee that you will contribute something precious or extraordinary. By making a choice, you will inspire someone. You might discover something no one has noticed before. You might see a new possibility or a new solution.
- Reader 1: But the problem of violence and guns seems so huge.
- Reader 2: The problem IS huge. Very few of us, alone, can do anything. But if you decide to get involved, when you join your heart and hands with other people, then the problem can be addressed. Something changes when you do something. Period.
- Reader 1: But will things ever get better?
- Reader 2: They can. There are a million stories about things getting better. At least one of those stories can be about you.
- Reader 1: For example?
- Reader 2: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a farmer took and planted in the field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.
- Reader 1: Amen!



Session 2 Attachment E: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Brady's Comprehensive Public Health Approach to Gun Violence Prevention: Get involved! Brady utilizes data to inform strategies tailored to community needs. Two methods of creating change include policy/systems change and community empowerment.

- **Policy and Systems Change:**
 - **Legislative Influence:** Brady advocates for laws that create safer environments. : <https://www.bradyunited.org/our-approach/policy-reform>
 - **Holding Gun Industry Accountable:** Brady promotes responsible gun ownership and safe storage practices. <https://www.bradyunited.org/programs/combating-crime-guns/reforming-gun-dealers>
- **Community Empowerment:**
 - **Violence Disruptors and Intervention Programs:** Engaging frontline workers to prevent and intervene in gun violence.
 - **Cultural Change:** Shaping norms around gun ownership and responsibility. <https://www.bradyunited.org/our-approach/culture-change>

Resources for Communities:

- **Safe Storage Toolkit:** Guidance on safe firearm storage to prevent accidents, particularly among youth.
- **Community Violence Intervention Programs:** Supporting frontline workers in schools, hospitals, and community organizations to disrupt cycles of violence.

Bringing Youth to the Table

<https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/join-movement/team-enough>

- **Generational Impact:** Youth are the generation most affected by gun violence from birth.
- **Involvement in Solutions:** Including young people in discussions and solutions is crucial for sustainable change.



- **Youth Leadership:** Encourage youth leadership programs and initiatives that empower young people to advocate for their own safety and well-being. <https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/join-movement/team-enough>

Action Steps for Faith Leaders and Community Organizers

- **Host Youth-Focused Summits and Meetings:** Design events specifically for youth to discuss and develop strategies to combat gun violence. <https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/join-movement/team-enough>
- **Partner with Youth Organizations:** Collaborate with youth-led organizations and initiatives focused on gun violence prevention. <https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/join-movement/team-enough>
- **Educational Programs:** Implement programs in schools and communities that educate young people about gun violence, its impact, and ways to advocate for change.

For more information on gun violence prevention efforts and to find local chapters or resources, visit [Brady United](#) and Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions:

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2024-01/2023-june-cgvs-u-s-gun-violence-in-2021-v3.pdf>



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 3

Reading

- Review Session 2 Attachment E: Action Toolkit. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context (Remember: This will help you prepare for the action discernment process during Session 8.)
- Gun Violence is a Racial Justice Issue:
<https://www.bradyunited.org/issue/gun-violence-is-a-racial-justice-issue>
- Domestic Violence and Firearms:
<https://strongheartshelpline.org/abuse/domestic-violence-and-firearms>
- Remembering and Honoring Pulse:
<https://everytownresearch.org/report/remembering-and-honoring-pulse/> *Please read this article with the following context in mind: Christian communities have a diversity of opinion around human sexuality. Regardless, we can all agree that everyone, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, is a child of God whose life is infinitely valuable and worth protecting."*
- The Second Amendment Enshrines Anti-Blackness:
<https://www.oprahdaily.com/entertainment/books/a40474135/anti-blackness-gun-control-second-amendment/> *This article is a summary of the author's book, The Second. For more documentation of how she arrived at the conclusions presented in the article, refer to The Second. JustFaith Ministries encourages participants to approach this article with an open mind and heart: In order to work across ideological lines to effect the change for which we all yearn, it is important to understand Anderson's perspective, even if you don't agree with all of her conclusions. Many of us are not accustomed to history being read through the lens of race, which is a fundamental part of the evolution and reality of the United States as a country.*
- Podcast: Your Man Card Reissued: The Truth about Masculinity and Gun Violence (35 minutes):
<https://www.bradyunited.org/resources/podcast/man-card-masculinity-gun-violence>

If possible, we strongly encourage participants to listen to the podcast – or listen and read at the same time – rather than simply reading the transcript, which does not capture the heart of the speaker's message.

Note: There is no reading from *The Violence Project* this week.



Spiritual Practice

Read the reflection below and answer the subsequent questions through journaling.

Reading 1: Mark 12: 28-31

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked them, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Reading 2: On Nonviolence

Nonviolence, as a way of life, begins from within. How can we love our neighbor as ourselves if we don't love ourselves? When we are able to recognize our own worth as children of God, when we are able to extend grace to ourselves, we become more capable of seeing others through a lens of love. And when others recognize our worth and extend grace to us, we become more capable of seeing ourselves through a lens of love.

Reading 3: "Thich Nhat Hanh" by Mary Lou Kownacki

The Russian mystic Saint Seraphim writes, "If you have inner peace, thousands of people around you will be saved." In my lifetime, I've met about a half dozen people who fit the saint's description. And each encounter has intensified my hunger for the bread that gives such wholeness.

One of those people is Thich Nhat Hanh, the Buddhist monk, poet, and best-selling author. During the Vietnam War he led the nonviolent resistance movement in South Vietnam and was forced to flee the country. After the truce was signed, the Communist government would not permit them to return, and he lives in exile in France on a small farm where he has a small Buddhist community. In the late 1970s I interviewed them for a book on monasticism and the peace movement. At the time he was still trying to settle Vietnamese refugees and other victims of the war.

Here was a man who had every right to be agitated, preoccupied, in a constant hurry; his life was a horror-movie serial. Daily he received anguished letters from friends telling them of imprisonment, hunger, illness, and death. Yet never had I met a more peaceful



person. Whenever I think of them, swinging in a tire swing in the backyard of his small Sweet Potato Community in France, I can feel the peace of his presence.

Besides becoming a very popular author, Nhat Hanh is a much-sought-after lecturer and retreat leader. He has done exceptional work with forgiveness, love, and reconciliation retreats for U.S. veterans damaged in the Vietnam War. I couldn't help but think of the quotation by Saint Seraphim when I recently read his Teachings on Love.

In the book he recounts a story told by a veteran during a retreat. The veteran said that during the war, guerrillas killed an entire platoon of his friends. To retaliate, the survivors baked cookies, put explosives in them, and left the cookies on the roadside. When some Vietnamese children saw the cookies, they ate them and the explosives went off. The children died in agony in their parents' arms. The image of these little ones suffering after the explosives ignited their small stomachs was so deeply ingrained on the veteran's heart that, twenty years later, he still could not sit in the same room with children.

I try to imagine myself leading a retreat like this. What could I possibly say or be to this person? That's how I know that I don't have the inner peace of Nhat Hanh. Someone as centered as he is knows what each person needs. Nhat Hanh told the veteran to "begin anew."

"You killed five or six children that day," Nhat Hanh said. "Can you save the lives of five or six children today? You still have your body, you still have your heart; you can do many things to help children who are dying in the present moment."

And just as Saint Seraphim predicted, the veteran responded to this man of inner peace and was healed.

Mary Lou Kownacki, "Thich Nhat Hanh," *A Monk in the Inner City*, (Orbis, 2008).

Questions for Journaling

Maybe you haven't endured this level of violence (or maybe you have), but we are all affected by cycles of violence that perhaps lead us to more violence.

- Are there cycles of violence in which you are wrapped up?
- What would it take for you to have inner peace?



About the next session....

Session 3 is called "Race, Gender, and Gun Violence," and there is a LOT to say about the intersections among these three topics. While this session won't cover everything, it WILL introduce two questions: 1. Why does gun violence impact certain racial and gender demographics differently than it impacts others? And 2. How can we work in solidarity with one another across differences? Your group will continue to explore these questions throughout the remainder of the program (and beyond).



Session 3 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Scripture reading

A reading from Genesis 4:8-10:

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me!

Howard Thurman (1900-1981), the author of the following prayer, is also the author of many books and served as professor and chaplain at Howard University.

Reader 1: Open unto me—light for my darkness.

Reader 2: Open unto me—courage for my fear.

Reader 1: Open unto me—hope for my despair.

Reader 2: Open unto me—peace for my turmoil.

Reader 1: Open unto me—joy for my sorrow.

Reader 2: Open unto me—strength for my weakness.

Reader 1: Open unto me—wisdom for my confusion.

Reader 2: Open unto me—forgiveness for my sins.

Reader 1: Open unto me—tenderness for my toughness.

Reader 2: Open unto me—love for my hate.



Reader 1: Open unto me—Thy Self for my self.

Reader 2: Lord, Lord, open unto me!

From *Meditations of the Heart* by Howard Thurman
Beacon Press, 1999.



Session 3 Attachment B: Gun Violence, Race, and Gender

Instructions: You will have 30 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. Choose a facilitator to read the questions and facilitate the conversation.

You may not have time to get to all the questions, and that's okay. Also, if there are any questions that particularly interest your group, prioritize those.

Spiritual Practice

- This week, you reflected on cycles of violence you've been a part of or witnessed in your own life. Is there anything you learned about yourself you'd be willing to share with the group?

"Gun Violence is a Racial Justice Issue" (Brady)

- The article states: "To address gun violence racial disparities, we must consider how and why Black people are more likely to face conditions that facilitate gun violence.....People who are victims of violence and do not sufficiently recover are more likely to commit violence themselves. In addition to the obvious physical damage, gun violence also hurts mental health, academic attainment, economic prospects, social networks, and reputation." An Everytown article puts it this way: "gun violence traumatizes entire communities, then stigmatizes that suffering."⁷

How might these statements be relevant to the city or town in which you live, or maybe even you personally?

- "Despite accounting for only 13.6% of the U.S. population, Black people account for 27% of those shot and killed by police since 2015." Nonetheless, gun deaths committed by police are often not considered "gun violence." In your opinion, what is behind this line of thinking? What role do you think police gun violence plays in decreasing or increasing gun violence overall?

"The Second Amendment Enshrines Blackness" (Carol Anderson)

⁷ Everytown, "Impact of Gun Violence on Historically Marginalized Communities": <https://everytownresearch.org/issue/impact-of-gun-violence-on-historically-marginalized-communities/>



- What did you think about Carol Anderson’s claim that the Second Amendment is rooted in anti-Blackness? Does her perspective influence how you think about the Second Amendment, and if so, how?
- In your own life experience, have you witnessed any double standards around White gun ownership and Black gun ownership?

“Domestic Violence and Firearms” (StrongHeart)

- What thoughts or emotions arose for you as you read the StrongHearts article about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women?
- The article connects the abuse of colonization with intimate partner abuse. Where do you see a connection between these two types of oppression? Can you give any examples?⁸

“Remembering and Honoring Pulse” (Everytown)

- Regardless of your denomination’s stance on human sexuality, all Christian denominations agree that all people, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, are made in God’s image, and their lives are of infinite worth. How can you help protect the lives of LGBTQ youth and adults?
- Is it possible to legislate against hate? How can we stop hateful and violence acts from happening? What did you think of the policy solutions that Everytown proposed at the end of the article? Would you consider talking to your representatives about any of these initiatives?

⁸ One contributing factor to the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women is “man camps,” or temporary housing for large groups of male workers in extractive industries. “Man camps” are often located near reservations.
<https://www.colorado.edu/program/fpw/2020/01/29/violence-extractive-industry-man-camps-endangers-indigenous-women-and-children>



Session 3 Attachment C: Gun Violence and Masculinity

Instructions: You will have 20 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. Choose a facilitator to read the questions and facilitate the conversation.

- Dr. Levant states in the Brady podcast episode “Your Man Card Reissued”: “Boys somewhere between the ages of four and six are made to feel that conformity to masculine norms is obligatory. They get the message that if you step too far out of line, you may receive punishment, and it may be severe. You should not walk, talk, throw, or act like a girl.”
 - If you identified as a boy when you were a child, does this statement resonate with you? How might this messaging affect your personality or the decisions you made/make?
 - If you identified as a girl when you were a child, One of the hosts says, “it’s more acceptable for women or girls to be interested in boy or male coded things, but the reverse is not necessarily true.” Does this statement resonate with your experience? How might the gender norms you experienced as a child affect your personality or the decisions you made/make?
- The last part of the episode focuses on the high suicide rate among men. What are your thoughts? How can your church or institution provide education around how depression might manifest itself among men, as well as practical resources for seeking help? (Be prepared to bring your ideas back to the large group.)
- Thinking about advertisements you’ve seen and conversations you’ve had across the social networks of which you’re a part, how do you think gender norms overlap with gun ownership and gun use?



Session 3 Attachment D: Closing Meditation

- Reader 1: Their blood cries out. Oh Lord have we become deaf? Your Spirit implores us yet again: "Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!" The blood of your sister cries out to me from the floor of her bedroom. From the streets where they ran, the neighborhood where they lived, from the fields and meadows, their blood cries out, our brothers, our sisters, our sons and our daughters. Their blood cries out, O Lord of Justice and Mercy.
- Reader 2: And we bear the mark, the mark that protects but does not forgive; the mark that privileges but does not redeem. We bear the mark of Cain, brother killer. Now we are wanderers in the land, wanderers from our true home, the blessed community, the righteousness of God. The blood cries out.
- Reader 3: Let us hear that cry, O Lord of Love and Hope. Let us open our ears to the cries of our brothers and sisters who have watered the ground with tears and with blood. Let us hear that cry. And then not stand unmoved in our supposed innocence, but stand with those who raise their voices in an unending cry for justice. Let us change our hearts, our minds, our prejudices, with repentance and action. Let us build the community you intended us to build from the very beginning.
- All: Their blood cries out. Let us hear, O Lord, let us hear. Amen.

Genesis 4:1-15

Derek C. Weber, July 2020 umcdiscipleship.org



Session 3 Attachment E: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Recommendations for Faith Leaders

1. Centering the People:

- **Understanding the Audience:** Tailor your approach to meet people where they are. Use resonant activities, messaging, and visuals to connect with diverse audiences effectively.

2. Honesty and Transparency:

- **Building Trust:** Acknowledge the history of gun violence and the mistakes made. Prioritize transparency to build trust and inform present actions.

3. Racial Equity, Cultural Competence, and Trauma-Informed Practices:

- **Integrating Values:** Uphold racial justice and equity as fundamental values in all initiatives. Recognize and address the impact of trauma on individuals and communities through culturally competent practices.

4. Intentional Messaging and Outreach:

- **Effective Communication:** Craft deliberate messaging to reach specific community implementers. Identify and target specific audiences to ensure impactful communication.

5. Understanding the Public Health Approach:

- **Comprehensive Solutions:** Educate on the scope of the gun violence problem from a public health perspective. Highlight the need for preventive measures and comprehensive solutions that address the root causes of gun violence.

Practical Strategies and Partnerships

Collaborate with Local Organizations:

- **Partner with Diverse Social Justice Organizations:** Engage with a wide range of civil rights and social justice organizations, such as the NAACP, National Urban League,



Southern Poverty Law Center, and others. Building partnerships amplifies efforts and reaches wider audiences.

- **Implement Safe Storage Initiatives:** Promote safe storage practices to prevent firearm access by unauthorized individuals, particularly children. Use resources like Brady's Safe Storage Toolkit to educate and implement these practices.
- **Advocate for Policy Changes:** Support policies that hold gun dealers accountable and prevent the flow of crime guns into vulnerable communities. Engage in advocacy for laws that promote safe storage and responsible gun ownership.

Observances and Cultural Engagement

Leveraging Observances:

- **Engage in Cultural Celebrations:** Participate in cultural and affinity group observances like Black History Month, Women's History Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month to build trust and foster meaningful connections.
- **Support Community Events:** Actively participate in community events and celebrations to show support and solidarity, building long-term relationships based on mutual trust and shared goals.

Educating and Empowering Communities

Shifting the Burden:

- **Hold Bad Actors Accountable:** Educate the community on holding gun dealers and manufacturers accountable for their role in perpetuating gun violence.
- **Combatting crime Guns Initiative (CCGI):** Brady's Combatting crime Guns Initiative (CCGI) program focuses on identifying and reducing the flow of illegal firearms. Promote the use of CCGI to address gun trafficking in vulnerable communities. Advocate for policies and programs that disrupt the flow of illegal firearms and hold responsible parties accountable. This includes collaborating with law enforcement, community groups, and policy makers to target the sources and pathways of crime guns.
<https://www.bradyunited.org/programs/combating-crime-guns>



Resources for Action

- **Brady United Resources:** Brady Safe Storage Toolkit and Brady's Combating Crime Guns Initiative Toolkit
- **Local Chapter Collaboration:** Reach out to Brady chapters for support and collaboration opportunities. Contact: chapters@bradyunited.org.
- **Educational Campaigns:** Participate in campaigns like Brady's End Family Fire to promote safe gun storage and prevent gun violence. <https://www.bradyunited.org/programs/combating-crime-guns>



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 4

Violence is as old as humanity. It goes all the way back to the garden of Eden. One of the first stories in the Bible, the inaugural sin outside the garden of Eden, is a brother killing a brother—the ancient story of Cain and Abel. The Bible says that Abel’s blood cried out to God from the ground (Gen. 4:10). The blood cried out. And the blood has been crying out to God ever since.

Tubal-Cain was Cain’s descendant. According to Genesis, Tubal-Cain “forged all kind of tools out of bronze and iron” (Gen. 4:22). The ancient historian Josephus regarded him as one of the strongest men in the world, an expert in martial performance, and one of the pioneers of working brass. Not only did Tubal-Cain create and design weapons; he demonstrated better than anyone else how to use them.

Tubal-Cain is the natural conclusion to a path that started with his ancestor killing his brother. The continual need to have a larger rock than your brother turns into a catapult with a giant boulder, which turns into a cannonball—and eventually the explosive that propels the cannonball is put in the cannonball and called a bomb. And don’t forget that we miniaturized the cannonball into a bullet, to be placed into a weapon that can be held in the palm of our hand.

Beating Guns: Hope for People Who Are Weary of Violence by Shane Claiborne and Michael Martin. Brazos Press, 2019.

Reading:

- Review Session 3 Attachment E: Action Toolkit. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context.
- *The Violence Project*: Chapters 3 and 4
- “Invisible Wounds: Gun Violence and Community Trauma among Black Americans” (Everytown):
<https://everytownresearch.org/report/invisible-wounds-gun-violence-and-community-trauma-among-bl>
[Invisible Wounds: Gun Violence and Community Trauma among Black Americans | Everytown Research & Policy](https://everytownresearch.org/report/invisible-wounds-gun-violence-and-community-trauma-among-bl)
[americans/](https://everytownresearch.org/report/invisible-wounds-gun-violence-and-community-trauma-among-bl)
- “Mental Illness and Gun Violence” (The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence):
<https://justfaith.org/app/uploads/2025/03/Mental-Illness-and-Gun-Violence-The-Educational-Fund-to-Stop-Gun-Violence.pdf>



- Take the ACEs survey:
<https://www.acesaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ACE-Questionnaire-for-Adults-Identified-English-rev.7.26.22.pdf>
- OPTIONAL (Will not be discussed in-session): Listen to "Childhood Trauma, Gun Violence, and the Fight for Safe Spaces."
<https://www.bradyunited.org/resources/podcast/ace-childhood-trauma-gun-violence-safe-spaces>

Spiritual Practice:

It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost. (Matt 18:14)

The authors of *The Violence Project* write: "According to the Harvard Center for the Developing Child, the single most common factor for children who are resilient in the face of trauma is a stable, committed relationship with a supportive adult in their lives" (p. 51). According to the Gospels, family includes all of God's children. We are invited to the care not just of our own children and grandchildren, but the care of *all* young people, particularly those who may not have access to the love and support they need to thrive.

Choose one of three options:

1. When you were a child, was there an adult in your life who showed you care and support? Write a letter to that person, regardless of whether they are still alive or if you are still in contact with them. Describe how you are different because of their care and support. If the person is still living and if you choose, mail the letter.
2. Write a letter to a young person in your life to let them know of your care and support. Mail the letter, if possible.
3. Take a moment to remember what life was like for you as a child or teenager. What struggles did you face? If possible, get out a childhood picture of yourself and take a moment to be present with the young person you once were. Write a letter of love, support, and encouragement to your former self.

About the next session...

Suicides account for over half of all gun violence in the United States. During Session 4, your group will learn about suicide prevention and explore practical ways to care for those who may be at risk. Additionally, you will discuss the impact of individual and community trauma, and how you replace "cycles of violence" with "cycles of care."



Session 4 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (New Revised Standard Updated Edition)

- Reader 1: The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.
- Reader 2: He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?"
- Reader 1: I answered, "O Lord God, you know."
- Reader 2: Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."
- Reader 1: So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them.
- Reader 2: Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."
- Reader 1: I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.
- Reader 2: Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil;



then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”
Amen.

Lyrics to “How Can I Keep from Singing”

My life goes on in endless song
Above earth’s lamentation.
I hear the real though far off hymn
That hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear that music ringing.
It sounds and echoes in my soul
How can I keep from singing?

But though the tempest round me roars
I know the truth, it liveth.
But though the darkness round me close
Songs in the night it giveth.

No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that rock I’m clinging.
Since love is lord of heaven and earth,
How can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble sick with fear
Can hear their death knells ringing,
When friends rejoice both far and near
How can I keep from singing?

In prison cell and dungeon vile
Our thoughts to them are winging
When friends by shame are undefiled,
How can I keep from singing?



Session 4 Attachment B: Pair Share (15 minutes)

With your partner, and to answer ONE of the questions below. Each partner can choose to answer a different question if you like. If you finish early, answer the second question. Ensure that both partners have an opportunity to share.

- The spiritual practice offered three options for reflecting on the role of supportive adults in a child's life. Describe your experience with this activity, sharing as much or little as you like. Is there anything you learned about yourself?
- How was your experience with the ACEs survey? What surprised you?



Session 4 Attachment C: Small Group Dialogue

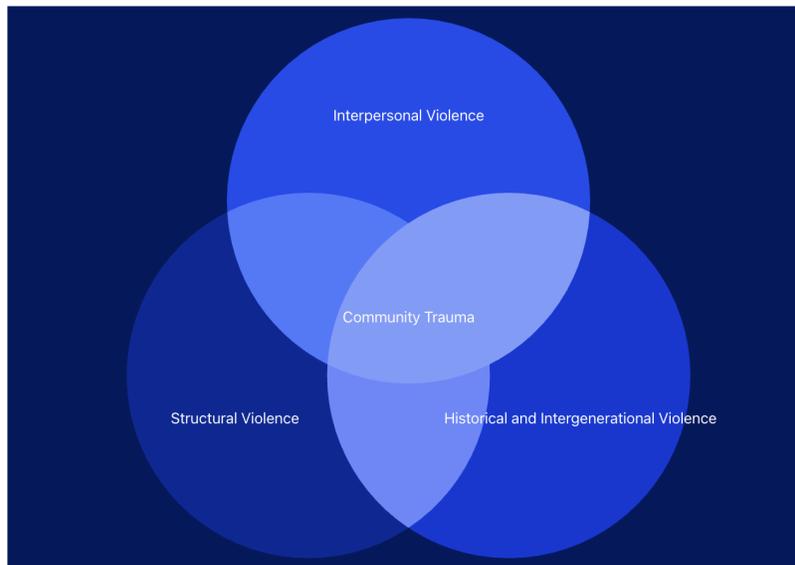
Instructions: You will have 20 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. Choose a facilitator to read the questions and facilitate the conversation.

You may not have time to get to all the questions, and that's okay. Also, if there are any questions that particularly interest your group, prioritize those.

- How did the readings challenge your assumptions about mental illness and gun violence?
- The ESFGV article "Mental Illness and Gun Violence" states: "An analysis of 219 mass shootings and subsequent news coverage found that the shooters' race strongly predicted whether the media discussed the shooters' mental health. When a mass shooting was carried out by a White or Latino person, the media often attributed it to mental illness. White shooters, in particular, were framed as good people suffering from extreme life circumstances and were 19 times more likely to be framed as suffering from mental illness compared to Black shooters. Black and Latino perpetrators were more often portrayed as ongoing threats to public safety, while White perpetrators were viewed more sympathetically, putting the blame on mental illness and not on the individuals themselves."
 - What are your thoughts? How does this phenomenon affect our decision-making – both personal decision-making and public policies?
 - How might this phenomenon affect the way we interact with one another across racial lines? How might it affect youth of color and the way they see themselves? How might it affect White youth and the way they see themselves?
- Because "trauma" has become a buzzword in our society, there is a lot of confusion about what "trauma" truly means and how it shows up in our lives.
 - Based on what you read this week, what is trauma? What is it *not*?
 - The Everytown article "Invisible Wounds" looked at the three forms of violence that combine and compound to produce community trauma (see below). To your knowledge, which forms of violence particularly affect your city/town?



Three forms of violence that combine and compound to produce community trauma



INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

- gun victimization
- witnessing gun violence
- hearing gunshots

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

- concentrated poverty
- residential segregation
- differential sentencing
- inadequate funding for schools, housing health care, public transportation

HISTORICAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL VIOLENCE

- legacy of America's painful colonial history
- predatory housing lending
- police violence
- broken intergenerational relationships

From Everytown: "Invisible Wounds: Gun Violence and Community Trauma among Black Americans": <https://everytownresearch.org/report/invisible-wounds-gun-violence-and-community-trauma-among-black-americans/>

- Do you truly believe that "a cycle of care can overcome a cycle of violence?" (*The Violence Project* p. 46). In concrete terms, what would a "cycle of care" look like in your community? Do you know of any individuals or organizations who are doing good work in this regard?



- What is the church's role in instituting a "cycle of care" in the community?
- The authors of *The Violence Project* write: "'Law-and-order' politicians, who favor individualized explanations for aberrant behavior over critiques of social structure, also like the label because it magically explains away mass shootings in their communities—the psychopath is the natural ally of the 'monster.'" With the teachings of Jesus and King's principles of nonviolence in mind, what do you make of this statement? What are some ways to challenge this kind of thinking in our community without causing people to shut down and stop listening? Optionally, role-play a scenario in your small group in which one person presents a "law and order" argument, and the other person presents a different perspective.



Session 4 Attachment D: Prayer for Life

Reader: God our Creator, you give breath to each person you made.

All: You treasure the gifts of each unique person.

Reader: But when life becomes a burden rather than a gift,

All: God of life, hold us.

Reader: When darkness strangles the will to live, when days become endless nights,

All: God of light, shine on us.

Reader: When no one seems to understand, when we walk and wait alone,

All: God of love, embrace us with your presence.

Reader: Where there is despair, bring hope; where there is shame, give value and worth; where there is emptiness, bring fulfillment; where there is suffering in mind and body, bring healing.

All: God of hope, hear our prayer for life.

Cindy Holtrop, Pathways to Promise

Important note: This prayer comes from the Faith. Hope. Life initiative, which seeks to involve every faith community in the United States, regardless of creed, in suicide prevention. Visit their website and consider using their resources in your congregation:

<https://theactionalliance.org/faith-hope-life>



Session 4 Attachment E: Closing Meditation

Litany for Gun Violence Prevention Week

Reader 1: *Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.*

Reader 2: God, we celebrate the gift of life for each person.

All: We commit to nurturing the well-being of each person here. We know for some, life is a burden filled with suffering.

Reader 1: Help us to talk about our fears, our anger, and our despair with someone we trust.

All: We celebrate that life has purpose and meaning. For some, purpose and meaning are like dry bones, dead and lifeless.

Reader 2: Remind us that You know us by name. You know our place and purpose in this world.

All: We are created to live in community. Some feel alone, unloved and disconnected.

Reader 1: Give us courage to reach out with love to someone who needs us.

All: May we be Your presence with them. Teach us to be gentle and non-judgmental.

Reader 2: We remember those who ended their life before it was time.

All: Comfort those who grieve and bring healing. Amen.

Cindy Holtrop, Pathways to Promise



Important note: The Litany for Gun Violence Prevention Week comes from the Faith. Hope. Life initiative, which seeks to involve every faith community in the United States, regardless of creed, in suicide prevention. Visit their website and consider using their resources in your congregation: <https://theactionalliance.org/faith-hope-life>



Session 4 Session F: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Trauma and Gun Violence

- **Connection to Trauma:** Exposure to gun violence often results in significant trauma, affecting mental health and increasing the risk of suicide. The impact of trauma is especially profound in communities with high rates of gun violence.
- **Youth and Mental Health:** Young people exposed to gun violence are particularly vulnerable to trauma-related mental health issues, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Recommendations for faith leaders and laypeople:

1. **Centering the Church's Role:** Churches are often an epicenter of support in their communities, providing support through pastoral care, hosting funerals, and offering counseling. Equip church leaders to recognize and address trauma and mental health issues related to gun violence.
2. **Integrating Mental Health Resources:**
 - **Training and Education:** Provide training for pastoral care teams on recognizing signs of trauma and suicidal ideation. Equip them with the tools to offer appropriate support and referrals to mental health professionals.
 - **Collaborate with Mental Health Professionals:** Partner with local mental health organizations to provide resources and counseling services. Create a network of support for individuals and families affected by gun violence.
3. **Suicide Prevention Strategies:**
 - **Promote Safe Storage Practices:** Incorporate Brady's Safe Storage Toolkit into pastoral care frameworks. Educate church members on the importance of safe firearm storage to prevent accidental injuries and suicides.
<https://www.bradyunited.org/programs/end-family-fire/ask-to-end-family-fire>
 - **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Host informational sessions and workshops on suicide prevention and safe storage practices. Engage the community in conversations about mental health and the steps they can take to reduce risks.



4. Empowering the Church Community:

- **Support Groups and Counseling:** Establish support groups for individuals affected by gun violence. Provide spaces for sharing experiences and healing.
- **Youth Engagement:** Develop programs specifically for young people to discuss trauma and mental health. Create safe spaces where youth can express their feelings and receive support.
- **Pastoral Care Integration:** Integrate mental health education and suicide prevention into regular church activities, including sermons, bible studies, and community outreach.

Practical Tools and Resources

1. Safe Storage Toolkit:

- **Resource Link: Brady Safe Storage Toolkit**
- **Implementation:** Distribute the toolkit during church events and incorporate its guidelines into pastoral counseling sessions.

2. Mental Health Partnerships:

- **Local Collaboration:** Partner with organizations like the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to provide training and resources.
- **Online Resources:** Utilize online mental health resources and hotlines for immediate support.

3. Educational Workshops:

- **Host Workshops:** Organize workshops focusing on trauma, mental health, and suicide prevention. Include sessions on the impact of gun violence on mental health.
- **Community Outreach:** Engage with the community through events and discussions about mental health and the role of the church in providing support.
- **Facilitate this program!:** Offer *Preventing Gun Violence: From Rhetoric to Real Solutions* for as many people in your church as possible in order to prepare your congregation to lead your community in preventing gun violence.



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 5

Reading:

- Review Session 4 Attachment F: Action Toolkit. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context.
- *The Violence Project*: chapters 6 and 7
- Red, White, and Brady: "Navigating the Landscape of Gun Ownership, Culture, and Reform" (podcast):
<https://www.bradyunited.org/podcast/episodes/novelist-david-joy-gun-culture-law-money-racism-and-the-nra->

Spiritual Practice

*Do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you,
Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'*

Isaiah 41:10

Violence often begins with fear, and fear keeps us from working together to end violence.

This week, read three articles from news outlets that target a different political leaning than your own (for example, if you lean more "progressive," read a more "conservative" news source, and vice versa). If possible, find articles on guns or gun violence. With each article you read, jot down your answers to the following questions:

- What hopes does this article tap into? Can you identify with any of these hopes, even if you don't agree with the article or if you find its information to be false or misleading? (For example, "hopes" may include a hope for safety, order, or peace.)
- What fears does this article tap into? Can you identify with any of these fears, even if you don't agree with the article or if you find its information to be false or misleading?
- How might the hopes and fears you hold in common inform your action steps for ending gun violence?



After you have finished writing, call to mind the author of the article you read. Repeat (aloud, if possible) this prayer attributed to Mahatma Gandhi:

I offer you Peace. I offer you Love.
I offer you Friendship. I see your Beauty.
I hear your need. I feel your feelings.
My wisdom flows from the Highest Source.
I salute that Source in You.
Let's work together for unity and love.
Amen.

About the next session....

After hearing from a guest speaker, your group will engage in a meditation around how fear shows up in your life and your community, in order to discern practical ways to cast out fear through love.



Session 5 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:25-37 (NRSV)

25 An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

29 But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and took off, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came upon him, and when he saw him he was moved with compassion. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, treating them with oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



Poem: The Right Word

Outside the door,
lurking in the shadows,
is a terrorist.

Is that the wrong description?
Outside that door,
taking shelter in the shadows,
is a freedom fighter.

I haven't got this right.
Outside, waiting in the shadows,
is a hostile militant.

Are words no more
than waving, wavering flags?
Outside your door,
watchful in the shadows,
is a guerrilla warrior.

God help me.
Outside, defying every shadow,
stands a martyr.
I saw his face.

No words can help me now.
Just outside the door,
lost in shadows,
is a child who looks like mine.

One word for you.
Outside my door,
his hand too steady,
his eyes too hard
is a boy who looks like your son,
too.

I open the door.
Come in, I say.
Come in and eat with us.

The child steps in
and carefully, at my door,
takes off his shoes.

Imtiaz Dharker. <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/right-word/>



Session 5 Attachment B: Journaling Activity on Fear

Silently journal about the following questions. If you do not finish a question before your facilitator continues to the next, make a note to continue reflecting on it later in the week.

1. Who do YOU fear? How does this fear show up in your words, actions, and decisions?

Note: If you're not sure, these questions could give you a clue: Does fear shape where you travel or go for a walk? Does it impact where you stop for groceries or a bite to eat? How does fear influence who you gravitate toward at a party or meeting where you don't know anyone?

2. If you are a gun owner, do you fear non-gun owners? Why or why not? If you are not a gun owner, do you fear gun owners? Why or why not?

Note: Sometimes resentment and fear are related emotions.

3. Where does fear show up in your church community? Who is feared? If you do not have a church community, ask these questions of the people you spend the most time with.

Note: Fear is not always explicit; we are frequently unaware of our fear.

4. Consider the city or town in which you live. Who is feared?

If you're not sure, these questions could give you a clue: Where are the underinvested areas of your town? For example, which areas lack trees, parks, sidewalks, and grocery stores? Where do law enforcement officers frequently patrol?



Session 5 Attachment C: Closing Meditation

Between⁹

by Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

Facilitator: God is not in me
nor in you
but between us

God is not me or mine
nor you or yours
but ours.

God is known
not alone
but in relationship.

Reader 1: Not as a separate, lonely power
but through our kinship, our
friendship,
through our healing and binding
and raising up of each other.

To know God is to know others,
to love God is to love others,
to hear God is to hear others.

Reader 2: More than meditation,
more than insight,
more than feeling,
between us are
claims, obligations, commandments;
to act, to do, to behave our beliefs.

⁹ Note: Although we cannot speak for the author's intentions, JustFaith Ministries included this poem not as a theological statement to be read literally, but as a reminder that we are inextricably bound together as God's children.



Reader 1: I seek God
not as if God were alone,
an isolated person, He or She,
a process, a power, a being, a thing.
I seek God
not as if I were alone,
a thinker, a mediator, a discrete entity.

I seek God in connection,
in the nexus of community.
I pray and celebrate the betweenness
which binds and holds us together.

Reader 2: And even when I am left alone,
I am sustained by my
memory of our betweenness
and the promise of our betweenness.

Facilitator: God is not in me, or in you, or in God's self,
but in betweenness
and it is there we find the evidence of
God's reality and our own. Amen.

Used with permission.

To learn more about the life and legacy of Rabbi Schulweis, visit <https://hmsi.info/>



Session 5 Attachment D: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Strategies for addressing fear in your church or community

1. Educational Workshops:

- **Diverse Perspectives:** Host workshops that include diverse perspectives and histories. Encourage participants to learn about and from different communities to reduce fear through understanding. Invite speakers from various backgrounds to share their experiences and insights. This helps humanize the "other" and fosters empathy.

2. Language Training:

- **Inclusive Language:** Train participants to use inclusive language that respects and values diversity. This involves avoiding terms that marginalize or stigmatize groups.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Teach conflict resolution skills that prioritize dialogue and understanding over fear and aggression. JustFaith Ministries has a program called *Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times*, which offers wisdom for navigating disagreement in a healthier way.

3. Community Building:

- **Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogues:** Organize interfaith and intercultural dialogues to bridge gaps between different communities. These dialogues can help dismantle stereotypes and build trust.
- **Collaborative Projects:** Encourage collaborative projects that bring together diverse groups to work on common goals. This fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose.

4. Partnerships with Brady United:

- **Resource Utilization:** Leverage Brady United's resources and training materials to educate communities on the impacts of fear-driven violence and how to counteract it.
- **Joint Initiatives:** Collaborate with Brady United to develop joint initiatives that promote peace, understanding, and community resilience.



Implementing These Strategies

1. Identify and Address Fear:

- Conduct surveys or focus groups to understand the specific fears present in the community.
- Develop targeted interventions based on the identified fears, using data and evidence-based practices.

2. Promote Positive Narratives:

- Use social media, local media, and community events to promote positive stories and narratives about diverse communities.
- Highlight examples of successful integration, collaboration, and mutual support within the community.

3. Educational Campaigns:

- Launch educational campaigns that focus on the historical context of fear and violence and the benefits of diversity and inclusion. (Considering offering JustFaith Ministries' [*Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice, and Restoration*](#) and/or [*The Land Is Not Our Own: Seeking Repair Alongside Indigenous Communities*](#)).



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 6

Reading

- Review Session 5 Attachment D: Action Toolkit. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context.
- *The Violence Project*: chapter 5
- You will have more time-intensive preparation assignments for Session 7, so it might be helpful to go ahead and get started on those this week.

Spiritual Practice

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

- Think about a crisis you had in your own life. Journal about your answers to these questions:
 - Who or what helped you to get through it? Where did you find comfort and support?
 - Who/what helped you heal from the crisis over the long-term?

After you've finished writing these first two questions, pause to review what you wrote and be grateful.

- What kind of support did you need but did not receive?
- Is there still healing that needs to be done?

After you've finished writing these last two questions, give yourself a minute or two to simply sit with the pain you may be feeling. Optionally, schedule a time to connect with a trusted friend, clergy member, or therapist to talk more about this topic.

- During Session 6, you'll be asked to share as much or a little about this exercise as you like. Your reflection will help inform the ways you lead your church or community in extending support, resources, and a safe place for healing for those in crisis.

**About the next session...**

During Session 6, your group will create an action plan for preventing violence in your community.



Session 6 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Micah 4:1-5 (NRSV)

**In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills.
Peoples shall stream to it,
and many nations shall come and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.
For all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God
forever and ever.**



Session 6 Attachment B: Small Group Dialogue

Instructions: You will have 20 minutes to discuss the questions below in your small groups. Choose a facilitator to read the questions and facilitate the conversation. You may not have time to get to all the questions, and that's okay.

- In chapter 5, the authors of *The Violence Project* report that 86% of mass shooters tell someone that they are thinking about violence before they do it. Later, the authors ask, "If someone told you that they were contemplating a mass shooting, would you know what to do and who to tell?" What is your answer to this question?
 - Think about the young adults in your life: How do you imagine they would answer this question?
 - If you are part of a church, think about the church staff, youth group leaders, and other members: How do you imagine they would answer this question?
- Have you ever participated in a school lockdown drill? Or, have your kids, grandkids, or other young people in your life participated in one? How did the experience affect you and/or your young friends or family members?
 - What do you think about the authors' conclusions that active shooter drills may do more harm than good, especially for children?
- *The Violence Project* authors conclude chapter 6 with this sentence: "In the end, our attention is our power." Thinking either about No Notoriety or more broadly, how does this sentence speak to you?
- In her book *Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land*, author Tori Jensen writes:

"When the vast majority of mass shooters are men and the majority are white men, by obfuscating the names of these shooters, we're obfuscating white male killers while publicizing each day the names and faces of Black and brown men who commit lesser crimes.....We have to look straight on at who commits mass violence, at who commits all violence, to understand the social, familial, and policy-related changes needed to shift the country toward change. We're all in this. To withhold the names, profiles, and white faces of the majority of mass killers is to pretend otherwise."



What do you think of this critique of the No Notoriety campaign?¹⁰

- The writers of *The Violence Project* ask: “Is America comfortable leaving it up to Silicon Valley to decide who is and is not the next mass shooter?” What’s your answer to this question? Can you think of any practical policies around social media use that could curb violence?
- “Acts of terrorism are performances of power by people who typically have very little” (*The Violence Project* p. 129). What do you think about this statement? Do you think that mass shootings motivated by hate should be labeled “terrorism”?

¹⁰ Jensen, Toni. *Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land* (p. 255-256). Random House Publishing Group.



Session 6 Attachment C: Creating a Crisis Prevention Plan

1. Review the purpose of a crisis response team.

The role of a crisis response team is to:

- Prevent violence toward oneself and/or others.
 - Ensure that no one is lost or ignored, and that everyone is receiving the care and support they need from the community and has access to available resources.
2. Discuss: Does your organization have a crisis response team as it is described in chapter 5 of *The Violence Project*? Or, is there a group or individual who fills a similar role? If so, how can you involve them in the conversation, partner with them, and/or support their work?
 3. Who would you invite to be on the core team? Factors to consider include:
 - Who has built trust or relationships within the community?
 - Is there a certain sub-community within your group who is sometimes sidelined, and how can you ensure that this community is represented on the core team? (For example, consider people of color, older adults, people from the disability community, and young adults. Or, if your church has a care team for those who are sick or in assisted living facilities, you will need to involve someone from this ministry).
 - Are there members of your community who have relevant skills? For example, if a church member has a background in social work or mental health, you may want to invite them.
 4. The core team will not be responsible for navigating all crises; rather, their role is to connect community members with available resources in order to leave them “in good hands.” (A representative from the core team or surrounding community should, of course, continue to check in and express care when appropriate).

What resources are available within your organization and in the surrounding community? Fill out and add to the chart on Session 6 Attachment D.

For each of the resources on your chart, you will also need to find out and record the information below (from p. 86 of *The Violence Project*). Your group can divvy up the



work and get started on this between Sessions 6 and 7, or you can make a plan to complete this after the program is finished. (If you choose this second option, write “finish the ‘In Good Hands’ list” on the “Now What” list)

- Who is the point of contact?
- Exactly what services are provided?
- Are you taking new clients/patients?
- Is there a wait list?
- Is there a fee associated with the service?
- Do you take insurance?
- How are referrals made?
- What is your location?
- Your hours?
- Do you have emergency appointments?
- Additional question: Do you offer services in languages other than English?

5. *The Violence Project* recommends that the community receive training on the warning signs of crisis, de-escalation, and suicide prevention. Who needs to receive the training, and what are the first steps you could take to help make it happen?
6. *The Violence Project* also recommends that the community come up with a reporting system through which community members could share when someone is in crisis. Examples include an anonymous app, an online form, or a jar with pencils and paper.

IMPORTANT: Our hidden biases affect our perceptions of who is in crisis – and who is “dangerous” – and who is not. For example, an 84-year-old White homeowner shot Ralph Yarl, a Black 16-year-old who rang the doorbell of the wrong house when he went to pick up his younger brothers from a friend’s home.

In addition to crisis intervention training, we also strongly recommend that the core team, and other key community members, take a program from JustFaith Ministries’ [racial justice series](#) (or a different anti-bias training program). After all, racism is a deadly – and preventable – crisis.

7. What kinds of behaviors or concerns need reporting? (Review and discuss the 4 D’s on page 86).



8. Review the list of questions on page 88. Can these questions be adapted to your context in a way that is relevant?
9. What are the next three steps you need to take in order to put this crisis prevention plan into action in your community? Who will be in charge of taking these steps, and by when will they have taken them?



Session 6 Attachment D: In Good Hands Resource List

Service	Contact information
Emergency	911
Non-emergency/mobile crisis unit	
Suicide Crisis Line	
Local Mental Health Agency	
Local Mental Health Agency	
Domestic Violence Ministry/Shelter	
Homeless Shelter	
Substance Abuse Counseling	
Legal Aid Assistance	
Financial Assistance	
Child Abuse Reporting	
Grief/Loss of Loved One	
Other resources	



Session 6 Attachment E: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Recommendations for Faith-Based Communities: Building Long-Term Trusted Partnerships

1. Collaborative Networks:

- **Community Coalitions:** Form coalitions with local organizations, such as mental health services, schools, law enforcement, and other faith-based groups. This creates a robust support network capable of addressing crises from multiple angles.
- **Shared Resources:** Develop agreements with partner organizations to share resources, training opportunities, and support systems. This ensures that all community members have access to necessary tools and information.

2. Ongoing Engagement:

- **Regular Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings with partner organizations to discuss ongoing issues, share updates, and plan joint initiatives. Consistent communication helps maintain strong relationships and ensures everyone is aligned on goals.
- **Community Events:** Host joint events, such as health fairs, workshops, and community forums, to foster a sense of unity and shared purpose. These events also provide opportunities to educate the community on crisis prevention and de-escalation strategies.

3. Trust-Building Activities:

- **Transparency:** Practice transparency in all dealings with partner organizations. Share successes and challenges openly to build trust and foster a collaborative spirit.
- **Mutual Respect:** Show respect for the expertise and contributions of all partners. Recognize and celebrate their achievements and support their initiatives.



Working with Trusted Partners

1. Training and Capacity Building:

- **Joint Training Programs:** Develop joint training programs with partners to equip community members with skills in crisis prevention, de-escalation, and mental health first aid. Use resources like Brady's training materials to enhance these programs.
- **Cross-Training:** Encourage cross-training between organizations to broaden the skill sets of staff and volunteers. This fosters a deeper understanding of each other's roles and strengthens the overall response network.

2. Community Education:

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Collaborate on public awareness campaigns to educate the community about the importance of safe storage, mental health resources, and suicide prevention. Use joint messaging to ensure a consistent and powerful impact.
- **Resource Distribution:** Work with partners to distribute educational materials and resources during community events. Ensure that information on available support services and crisis intervention strategies is widely accessible.

Practical Strategies for De-Escalation

1. Recognizing Warning Signs: *(beware of bias, and privilege driven behavior)*

- **Training:** Provide training on recognizing early warning signs of a crisis, such as changes in behavior, withdrawal, or signs of distress. Early recognition allows for timely intervention.

2. Immediate Intervention:

- **Non-Violent Communication:** Teach non-violent communication techniques to de-escalate tense situations. This includes speaking calmly, avoiding confrontational language, and showing empathy. JustFaith Ministries' [*Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times*](#) introduces these practical skills



- **Creating a Safe Environment:** Ensure that the environment is safe for everyone involved. This may include removing potential weapons and ensuring there is a clear path for exit if needed.

3. Long-Term Support:

- **Follow-Up:** After a crisis has been averted, follow up with the individuals involved to provide ongoing support and ensure they have access to necessary resources.
- **Support Networks:** Establish support networks within the church community where individuals can receive continuous care and assistance from trained volunteers and professionals.



IMMERSION ATTACHMENTS

Opening Meditation

Pilgrimage Prayer

- Reader 1: When darkness abounds,
 When the way forward seems elusive,
 When the days seems burdensome and tiring,
 We consider where cracks of light beckon.
- Reader 2: The durability of hope nudges us
 To search for possibility, new beginnings,
 A way out of the chaos of crisis and fear.
- Reader 1: The Spirit inclines toward repair, healing and reconciliation
 And leads us in search of resolution and restoration,
 A new heaven and a new earth, new wineskins for new wine.
- Reader 2: And, so, we ready ourselves for pilgrimage.
 We pack nothing, carry little.
 We burnt the old maps; they take us to the same places.
 We walk in a new direction.
- Reader 1: To walk in the footsteps of Jesus
 Is, at the very least, to walk. This is a journey.
 We can't stay home.
- Reader 2: We are searching for those who live in the cracks of light,
 Who may even be the bringers of light.
 We go with hands open, minds open, hearts open.
 We just want to see the light that can pierce darkness.
- Reader 1: To ready ourselves, we assume newness.
 This is no time to carry the past as armor or argument.



Unless a grain of wheat falls unto the ground and dies,
Where is its life?

Reader 2: Practice death and resurrection.
Practice emptiness and openness.
Practice receptivity and reciprocity.

Reader 1: Those who live in the cracks of light,
who shed light, who bring light,
Are witnesses to hope.

Reader 2: They are not perfect,
They carry much pain,
But they bear the pain,
Like anyone carrying pain does,
In anticipation of healing.

Reader 1: We bow to the cloud of witnesses
Who, throughout history, have kept hope alive.
We sit at their feet, eager to learn,
And be renewed just by being near them.

Reader 2: Be not afraid. Their lives, perhaps strange to us,
Nevertheless take us into the places
Where light and dark touch, making sight possible.

Reader 1: We pray this in the name of the One Who is Light.

Reader 2: Amen.

Litany

Reader 1: Open our eyes, God of Light,
So we might see the way forward.

Reader 2: Open our eyes, God of Light,
So we might recognize our blindnesses



Reader 1: Open our eyes, God of Light,
So we might see our human family.

Reader 2: Open our eyes, God of Light,
So we recognize and embrace beauty.

Reader 1: Open our eyes, God of Light,
So we recognize and dispel destruction.

Reader 2: Open our eyes, God of light,
So that truth and love are clear.

Reader 1: Amen.

Concluding Prayer

The Day's Work Revealed

Reader 1: When I was young,
My family would gather for dinner each evening
And we would tell the stories of our day.

Reader 2: Dinner guests would tell stories, too.

Reader 1: I remember many of the stories,
But what I remember most is *how* stories were told.

Reader 2: Some told stories to make everyone laugh.
Some told stories to impress.
Some told stories to share a wonder.

Reader 1: I remember that I told stories to figure them out.
I told them one way the first time
And another the way the second time
Because I was still learning what they meant to me.

Reader 2: So, my friend, what is the story from this day's work that you want to tell?
How many ways can you tell the story?
What did the story mean?



Reader 1: I want to hear your story today,
And next year, after you have tasted it,
After you have walked that story in your life.
The living word, if you will.

Reader 2: I want to hear the story you have taken to heart.
I want to hear the story that gave you life.
I want to hear the story that made you bigger.
And I will tell you mine.

Reader 1: At the table of blessing,
Let us tell stories of this day
That spoke to tragedy with lessons learned.
That spoke to hope and love lived.

Reader 2: Amen.



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 7

"There is a way to beat guns. And it addresses the triggers in our hearts as well as the triggers in our streets. We need everyone at the table. Those who believe we don't have a gun problem need to be at the table teaching us how to deal with our heart problem. Those who believe we do have a gun problem need to be at the table offering creative ways to move our society away from nearly unfettered access to guns and toward responsible gun ownership. We must not allow ourselves to be cold and removed from the softening of the forge. We must lean into each other, without fear of the other."

Claiborne, Shane; Martin, Michael. *Beating Guns: Hope for People Who Are Weary of Violence* (pp. 260-261). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Reading

- Review Session 6 Attachment E: Action Toolkit. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context.
- The Violence Project: chapter 8
- Read the Brady Blueprint. Is there a solution about which you feel particularly passionate? During Session 7, you will explore three of many possible advocacy opportunities available to you; this webpage will provide the birdseye view you need to understand how these solutions fit within the larger movement to prevent gun violence. <https://brady-2-stage.s3.amazonaws.com/2023-Legislative-Blueprint-V9.pdf>
- Explore the Everytown webpage "Compare State Gun Laws": <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/compare/?states=IN%2CMA>.

Spiritual Practice

Read and/or listen to Dr. Martin Luther King's 1967 "Christmas Sermon on Peace."

- Written version: <https://onbeing.org/blog/martin-luther-kings-last-christmas-sermon/>



- Audio version (the internet location of King's speeches is constantly changing. If this link is not working, you may need to search for the sermon elsewhere on YouTube): <https://youtu.be/1jeyIAH3bUI?si=AU3H2u0BYPhMgnhl>

Reflect silently or journal about the following questions:

- King writes that "all life is interrelated." Where do you see evidence of this truth in your own life?
- King argues that "ultimately destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends." Do you agree?
- When have you experienced *agape* love? How does *agape* love inform your view of guns and gun violence prevention?

King spends the last several minutes of his sermon articulating the dream he has for the world. What is your dream? Using whichever form of art you prefer (prose, poetry, watercolor, crayons, collage, etc), illustrate it.

About the next session....

During Session 7, your group will discuss ways to prevent violence in your community and our nation through systemic change.



Session 7 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Scripture Reading: Luke 6:6-11 (NIV)

On another Sabbath [Jesus] went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.



Session 7 Attachment B: Closing Meditation

This prayer was written by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw in 1979 as a prayer for the departed priests. When Saint Oscar Romero died a year later, people began to associate the prayer with his life and work.

Reader 1: It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.

Reader 2: Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives
includes everything.

Reader 3: That is what we are about.
We plant a seed that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations
that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

Reader 4: We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation
in realizing that.



This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.

Reader 5: We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.



Session 7 Attachment C: Discerning Next Steps

Read between Sessions 7 and 8

*"Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world's greatest needs."
— Frederick Buechner*

During Session 8, your group will plan the action steps you will take in response to what you have experienced in this JustFaith Ministries program. While it is important to continue educating yourself, insight without action is of little or no value, and your action plan should therefore include concrete steps you will take to address gun violence. If your group would like assistance with the discernment process, contact Outreach and Engagement Manager Leila Oakley by emailing leila@justfaith.org.

To prepare for your group's discernment process, follow the instructions below.

1. **Center yourself in the Holy Presence:** Find a quiet, comfortable space where you will not be distracted. Take a few moments to notice your breath. Invite God's Spirit into your discernment process.
2. **What action step will you take individually?** Consider all you have experienced on your JustFaith Ministries journey. Flip through *The Violence Project*, the program material, and action toolkits; as you do so, recall where you experienced a sense of energy, urgency, excitement, or anger. These emotions may give you a clue as to how you are being called to take action as an individual. In addition, read through your group's "Now What?" list, if you have it available. Do you feel any energy around any of these potential action steps?

During Session 8, you will be asked to name your individual action step aloud.

3. **What action steps will you take with your group?** Taking action as a community can help you maximize your impact and engage in mutual support. During Session 8, your group will choose one of four options for how you will take action as a group.

Prayerfully consider each of the options so you can bring an informed opinion to your group's discernment process during Session 8. Choose at least two options you'd be open to taking.



Option 1: **Continue on to another JustFaith Ministries program.**

Who is this for? Option 1 may be the best fit for groups whose members feel they need more education and formation before taking collective action..

How to prepare: Take a look at the program offerings described on the JustFaith Ministries website, and consider which program looks most relevant to your group. Two to consider include:

Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration:

<https://justfaith.org/faith-and-racial-healing-embracing-truth-justice-and-restoration/>

Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times:

<https://justfaith.org/want-to-talk/>

Option 2: **Cultivate a new group:** Together with your current group, offer *Preventing Gun Violence* for a new group of participants. Option 2 requires all hands on deck from everyone in your current group: in addition to two co-facilitators, you will also need volunteers to invite new participants into the group, create social media and/or bulletin announcements, and help plan other logistical details.

Who is this for? Option 2 can be a particularly effective next step if your current group belongs to the same church or organization. Getting more individuals from your institution on the same page about preventing gun violence can mobilize the institution as a whole. By working together, you can create a sustainable gun violence prevention team and accomplish bigger goals. (This program can serve as a training or enrichment tool for this team.)

How to prepare: Consider who from your current group might be a good facilitator and if there is a role you would like to serve in coordinating and supporting a new group.

Option 3: **Create a community action plan using the JFM program *Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice* to guide your process:** *Just Action* will walk your group step-by-step through creating and implementing an achievable action plan around a concern of your choice, such as advocating for the institution of red flag or permit-to-carry laws in your state. Along the way,



Just Action will introduce practical grassroots organizing and advocacy tools that can equip you for effective and sustainable action that aligns with your faith.

Who is this for? Option 3 is especially great for groups who are serious about creating systemic change, and who can dedicate about four to six months to participating in *Just Action* and implementing their action plan.

How to prepare: Read about *Just Action* on JustFaith Ministries' website, and consider whether it could be a helpful next step for your group:

<https://justfaith.org/just-action-how-to-advocate-and-mobilize-for-justice/>

Option 4: **Take action as a group without using *Just Action*:** If you choose this option, your group will review the "Now What?" list and discern a goal together. Next, you will name action steps to help you achieve that goal.

Who is this for? Option 4 is for groups who feel they are ready to jump into action without further guidance from JustFaith Ministries, or for those who cannot commit to taking *Just Action*.

How to Prepare: Consider ideas for what your group's goal might be, as well as steps you might take together to achieve it.



Session 7 Attachment D: Action Toolkit

By Hannah Naomi Jones, Director of Organizing, Brady United

Make Your Voice Be Heard | Take Action in Support of Evidence-Based Policy Solutions

1. **Expand Brady Background Checks:** We need your help urging the U.S. Senate to support S. 529, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. This life-saving legislation would prevent senseless gun violence by expanding background checks to all private gun sales and most transfers. Please use the form to make your voice heard! Each day we wait to pass this legislation, more than 100 Americans will die of gun violence.
 - Action: Advocate for the expansion of Brady Background Checks to close existing gaps and prevent prohibited purchases.
 - Impact: Strengthening background checks is foundational to all other gun safety laws.
 - <https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/sign-a-petition/expand-brady-background-checks>

2. **Ban Assault Weapons and Large-Capacity Magazines:** Some of the deadliest mass shootings in America all have one thing in common: The shooter used an assault weapon. They're uniquely lethal, designed to kill as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. These weapons of war have no place in civilian hands. Use the form below to urge Congress to ban these weapons of war, once and for all.
 - Action: Urge lawmakers to ban assault weapons and large-capacity magazines.
 - Impact: Reducing the availability of these weapons can prevent mass shootings and reduce overall gun violence.
 - <https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/sign-a-petition/ban-assault-weapons>

3. **Support Ethan's Law and Promote Safe Gun Storage:**
 - Action: Advocate for safe gun storage laws to prevent accidental shootings and unauthorized access.
 - Impact: Safe storage laws protect children and others from unintentional firearm injuries and deaths.
 - <https://www.bradyunited.org/take-action/sign-a-petition/ethans-law>

Other Key Policy Solutions

1. **Expanding Background Checks:**



- **Universal Background Checks:** Advocating for the implementation of universal background checks to ensure that all firearm purchases are subjected to a thorough vetting process. This policy is widely supported by both gun owners and non-gun owners.
- **Closing Loopholes:** Addressing loopholes in the current background check system, such as those for private sales and gun shows, to prevent firearms from falling into the wrong hands.

2. Addressing Root Causes of Gun Violence:

- **Community Violence Intervention:** Supporting programs that address the root causes of gun violence, such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to mental health services. Community-based interventions can help reduce violence before it starts.
- **Safe Storage Laws:** Promoting laws that require safe storage of firearms to prevent accidental shootings and unauthorized access, particularly by children.

3. Defending Democratic Norms:

- **Protecting Voting Rights:** Ensuring that democratic processes are protected and that all citizens have the right to participate in elections without intimidation or barriers. This includes combating voter suppression tactics and promoting fair representation.

Recommendations for Faith Leaders

Advocacy and Activism

1. Educate and Mobilize:

- **Educational Campaigns:** Conduct educational campaigns within your faith community to inform members about the importance of these policies and how they can help reduce gun violence. Use materials and resources from Brady United.



- **Workshops and Seminars:** Host workshops and seminars that focus on understanding gun violence and effective advocacy strategies. Invite experts and survivors to share their stories and insights.

2. Engage with Legislators:

- **Meetings with Legislators:** Organize meetings with local, state, and federal legislators to discuss the importance of implementing these policies. Faith leaders can be powerful advocates, bringing a moral and ethical perspective to the conversation.
- **Letter-Writing Campaigns:** Coordinate letter-writing campaigns where community members write to their representatives urging them to support gun violence prevention measures.

3. Build Coalitions:

- **Interfaith Coalitions:** Form interfaith coalitions that bring together different religious communities to advocate for gun violence prevention. These coalitions can amplify the message and show broad support for the proposed policies.
- **Community Partnerships:** Partner with local organizations, schools, and advocacy groups to build a united front in the fight against gun violence. Collaborate on events, rallies, and public statements to increase impact.



PREPARATION FOR SESSION 8

Reading and Spiritual Practice:

- Review Session 7 Attachment D: Action Toolkit. Circle any action steps that seem particularly compelling or relevant to your context.
- Complete Session 7 Attachment C: Discerning Next Steps. Set aside one hour for this activity, which will be foundational to your group's conversation in Session 8!

JustFaith Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. We rely on donations from graduates like you to help us create our programs and get them to the communities who need them. We hope you consider making a donation, and joining with us in building a more just, peaceful, and equitable world. To support our work, visit: justfaith.org/donate

About the next session....

During Session 8, your group will commit to responding to what you have learned by creating two action plans: one you will incorporate into your daily lives, and another you will implement as a small group.

AFTER SESSION 8

- Fill out the Session 8 survey
 - For facilitators: <https://justfaith.org/facilitator-post-program-survey/>
 - For participants: <https://justfaith.org/participant-post-program-survey/>



Session 8 Attachment A: Opening Meditation

Reading

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew. Jesus asked those present, "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first."

Reader 2: Who did the father's will, it is clear, is the one who acted.

Reader 1: Our words matter, but only when they point to and precede action.

Reader 2: Thy will be *done*. Will be *done*. Be *done*. *Done*.

Pause.

Reader 2: A reading from an ancient fable. A man walking through the forest saw a fox that had lost its legs and wondered how it lived. Then he saw a tiger come with game in its mouth. The tiger had its fill and left the rest of the meat for the fox.

The next day God fed the fox by the same means of the same tiger. The man began to wonder at God's greatness and said to himself, "I too shall just rest in a corner with full trust in the Lord and he will provide me with all I need."

He did this for many days but nothing happened, and he was almost at death's door when he heard a voice say "O you who are in the path of error, open your eyes to the truth! Follow the example of the tiger and stop imitating the disabled fox."

Reader 1: Our gift is not what we can get. It's what we can give.

Pause

Reader 1: Let us pray.



- Reader 2: Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me, on us, on us all.
- Reader 1: Let our lives be invigorated by a fresh vision and unexpected energy
To be healers, to be the bearers of good things, to be allies of love.
- Reader 2: Thy will be done. Let us be doers of thy will, agents of justice, and
friends to those who have been betrayed, speaking truth to power.
- Reader 1: If there are parts of us that are scared, tired or paralyzed—and there are—
Give us new insights to dispel whatever is in the way of our next steps.
- Reader 2: New relationships await. New wisdom is waiting to be mined.
New discoveries are for the having.
- Reader 1: All that is required is a small “yes” to take a step, a gentle “Amen” to God’s
beckon.
- Reader 2: The revolution will not be televised. You’ll have to see it for yourself.
You’ll have to make it happen in your body. You are the Body of Christ.
- Reader 1: Gracious God, do not look upon what we have left undone.
Your mercy forgives and invites.
- Reader 2: If we have ignored your invitations—for fear or confusion—we only ask
that your Holy Spirit empower us to be open to what is ours to do.
- Reader 1: Love’s promise awaits. Love’s promise abounds. Love’s promise is ours.
- Reader 2: Amen. Alleluia.



Session 8 Attachment B: Continue on to Another JFM Program

Attachment A is in the Participant Packet and is not needed to facilitate this session.

Continuing on to another JustFaith Ministries program can be a great fit for groups whose members feel they need more education and formation before taking collective action.

If your group has chosen this option, follow the steps below.

Step 1: Decide which program your group would like to take next.

If some participants have not had a chance to read the descriptions of each program on the JustFaith Ministries website, it may be helpful to pull up the pages on a screen. Two programs to consider may be:

- *Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration:*
<https://justfaith.org/faith-and-racial-healing-embracing-truth-justice-and-restoration/>
- *Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times:*
<https://justfaith.org/want-to-talk/>

Step 2: Decide the following logistical details:

- When will you begin your next program?
 - Note: In addition to the eight regular sessions, JustFaith Ministries programs contain an immersion experience. Some (such as Faith and Racial Healing) also contain a retreat.
- If your group will be meeting in-person, decide where your meetings will take place.
- Decide if you would like to open your group to new participants. The recommended group size is 7-14 for in-person groups and 7-12 for virtual groups, including facilitators.

Step 3: Decide who will co-facilitate.



- You will need two co-facilitators. While current co-facilitators can certainly continue in their roles, choosing new co-facilitators can prevent facilitator burnout and create opportunities for shared leadership.
- Co-facilitators should have the capacity to invest the following time each week:
 - 1 hour for weekly session preparation, plus additional time for coordinating a guest speaker and immersion experience in most programs
 - 1-1.5 hours to complete weekly assignments
 - 2 hours to facilitate each weekly session
- Facilitator training and support is available from JustFaith Ministries.

Step 4: Brainstorm about the immersion experience and guest speaker:

You will have the opportunity to hear from a guest speaker and engage in an immersion experience. With your program topic in mind, can you think of anyone you would invite as a guest speaker? How about a group or organization you would like to visit with for your immersion experience?

You do not have to decide the answer to this question today! However, it can be helpful to begin thinking about who you would like to invite, as well as who from your group could coordinate the guest speaker's visit and immersion experience.

Step 5: Reflect on the following questions:

- Thinking back on your group's journey together so far, is there anything you would like to do differently as you embark on this new phase of your journey? (For example, groups may wish to convene before or after each session for extended conversation and fellowship, or perhaps there is a group guideline you would like to commit to following more closely).
- What are decisions you have made that you would like to uphold and continue during the next phase of your journey? Or, what are qualities of your group that you really appreciate?



Session 8 Attachment C: Cultivate a New Group

Making this program available to a new group of participants is one effective way to take action in response to what you have learned during your own journey. By working together with program graduates of multiple small groups, you can accomplish much bigger goals than you could individually or as a single small group.

If your current group is part of the same faith community or organization, offering this program to more of your institution's members can help you to mobilize the institution as a whole. As more participants graduate from the program, you might consider creating a gun violence prevention team, perhaps using this program as a training or enrichment tool.

To maximize effectiveness, all participants should participate in coordinating and supporting the new group. Below are some questions to discuss with your current group during Session 8.

Note: It will be very important that your current group coordinate a gathering with the new group after they have finished Session 8. The purpose of this gathering will be to determine the action steps you will take together to create effective and sustainable change.

Building a Community: Recruitment and Promotion

- For whom would you like to offer this program? For example, do you seek to offer the program within a particular church, organization, or other institution?
- Including facilitators, you will need 7-14 participants for an in-person group or 7-12 for a virtual group. Who would you like to invite into the group? **List specific names, and assign group members to reach out to them with personal invitations.**

A few notes:

- While making an announcement in a newsletter or from a pulpit can be helpful, personal invitations (face-to-face, over the phone, or through video conferencing) work best.
- If you are hoping to mobilize a church or organization, it might be helpful to include those in positions of influence — such as clergy or committee leaders — who can incorporate the principles they learn into institutional decision-making, as well as motivate others to participate in future program offerings.



- To the best of your abilities, seek out diverse voices, as well as those whose lives are personally affected by the injustices you seek to address. A diversity of backgrounds and perspectives can enrich the group's conversations and result in more effective action planning. If your group consists of people of color, at least one facilitator should be a person of color, if possible.
- Would your group like to promote the new group through social media, a bulletin announcement, or newsletters? **If so, who are two people from your current group who can take the lead on promotion?**
 - JustFaith Ministries provides a promotion kit, which contains images and sample scripts you can use for social media, newsletters, and other promotional spaces. The promo kit can be found on the program page of the JustFaith Ministries website, justfaith.org.

Facilitation

- Invite current co-facilitators to share about their own facilitation experience. Then discuss: Who in your group has the time and spiritual gifts needed to co-facilitate the new group? **Choose two people to be co-facilitators.**¹¹
 - Co-facilitators should have the capacity to invest the following time each week:
 - 1 hour for weekly session preparation, plus additional time for coordinating a guest speaker and immersion experience
 - 1-1.5 hours to complete weekly assignments
 - 2 hours to facilitate each weekly session
 - Facilitator training and support is available from JustFaith Ministries.
- Will the new co-facilitators need assistance in running the technology during each session? If so, who is someone from your current group who can either show the co-facilitators how to use the necessary technology or attend each session to run the technological elements?

¹¹ Alternatively, you could choose one co-facilitator from your current group and one new co-facilitator from the new group.



Hospitality

- Who is someone from your current group who enjoys hospitality? **Choose one or two hospitality coordinators from your current group** to assist in welcoming the new group. This role can be creative: it may include securing a meeting location; setting up the meeting room with comfortable chairs and soft lighting; bringing coffee and refreshments the first or all weeks; or hosting a celebration gathering after the new group has finished Session 8.

Immersion and Guest Speakers

- Who from your group has connections with a guest speaker or immersion organization? **Choose one to two people to help set up the guest speaker and immersion for the new group.**

Loose Ends

What other details need to be decided before the group? Write them down, and assign participants to take the lead on coordinating each.



Session 8 Attachment D: Continuing to Just Action

Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice will walk your group step-by-step through creating and implementing an achievable action plan around a public policy solution of your choice. For example, your group could choose to focus on advocating for red flag laws or permit-to-carry laws in your state. Along the way, *Just Action* will introduce practical grassroots organizing and advocacy tools that can equip you for effective and sustainable action that aligns with your faith.

Just Action is especially great for groups who are serious about creating systemic change, and who can dedicate about four to six months to participating in *Just Action* and implementing their action plan.

If your group has chosen this option, follow the steps below.

Step 1: Ensure your group is on the same page about what *Just Action* is and what it requires of participants.

Review the information about *Just Action* found on JustFaith Ministries' website. Note especially that *Just Action* is for groups that can commit to carrying out a 1-3 month action plan after the program is finished.

Step 2: Decide the following logistical details:

- When will you begin *Just Action*?
 - Note: In addition to the eight regular sessions, *Just Action* contains a 3-hour discernment retreat and an immersion experience.
- If your group is meeting in-person, decide where your meetings will take place.

Step 3: Decide who will co-facilitate.

While current co-facilitators can certainly continue in their roles, choosing new co-facilitators can prevent facilitator burnout and create opportunities for shared leadership. You will need two co-facilitators.



- Co-facilitators should have the capacity to invest the following time each week:
 - 1 hour for weekly session preparation, plus additional time for coordinating an opening retreat, guest speaker, and immersion experience
 - 1-1.5 hours to complete weekly assignments
 - 2 hours to facilitate each weekly session
- Facilitator training and support is available from JustFaith Ministries.

Step 4: Reflect on the following questions:

- Thinking back on your group’s journey together so far, is there anything you would like to do differently as you embark on this new phase of your journey? (For example, groups may wish to convene before or after each session for extended conversation and fellowship, or perhaps there is a group guideline you would like to follow more closely)
- What are decisions you have made that you would like to continue in the next phase of your journey? Or, what are qualities of your group that you really appreciate?



Session 8 Attachment E: Group Action Plan

If your group feels ready to jump into action without further guidance from JustFaith Ministries, or if your group cannot commit to continuing with another JustFaith Ministries program or taking *Just Action*, follow the steps below.

1. Review the “Now What?” list you have created together as a group. Decide on one action step you would like to take together.

If your group would like to take multiple action steps, that is great! For now, choose one action to start with. Once this action step has been achieved, you can move onto other action steps.

While it is important to always continue learning, for the purposes of this exercise choose an action step to prevent gun violence rather than continue your education.

2. Turn your action step into a SMART goal and write it at the top of the Group Action Plan chart below.

A SMART goal takes the form of a single, short sentence that everyone can understand. It has the following qualities:

- **Specific**: Narrow it down as much as possible. For example, can your goal be refined to one particular geographic location, policy, or institution?
- **Measurable**: You should be able to measure your progress toward meeting your goal.
- **Achievable**: Choose a goal that is realistic for your group. Do not be afraid to start with a relatively easy win!¹² (If the group seems overwhelmed by the proposed goal, this may be a sign that your goal is not achievable enough).
- **Relevant**: Your goal should be relevant to everyone in your group.
- **Time-bound**: This goal should not be ongoing. Ideally, your group should be able to achieve your goal within 1-3 months after Session 8.

¹² An “easy win” can fuel energy for setting more ambitious goals in the future.



Examples of SMART goals include:

- Start a gun violence prevention team in our church/organization by January 1st.
 - Organize a suicide prevention training for our church/organization by March 21st.
 - Together as a group, participate in a gun violence prevention advocacy organization's action event. (Your group will need to specify the name of the event, date, and time). Check out the [Brady](#) web page for ideas.
 - By April 31st, set up a meeting with our representative to address a specific gun violence issue our group is concerned about (Obviously, this goal will need to be more specific. Your [Bread for the World regional organizer](#) may be able to help if you choose this option)
3. Fill in the chart below:
- Write your SMART goal at the top of your chart.
 - List each step you will need to take in order to reach your goal.
4. Plan a celebration and next steps: Once you have achieved your goal, plan to reconvene to celebrate your accomplishments!

At this gathering, you can also discuss whether your group would like to: 1. take on another action step, 2. participate in another JustFaith Ministries program, 3. offer this program for a new group, or 4. participate in *Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice*.



Group Action Plan

Our group's goal:

Steps <i>List, one step at a time, the actions you will take to achieve your goal</i>	By Whom? <i>Who will be responsible for taking each step?</i>	By When? <i>Name a specific date that each step will be accomplished.</i>



Steps <i>List, one step at a time, the actions you will take to achieve your goal</i>	By Whom? <i>Who will be responsible for taking each step?</i>	By When? <i>Name a specific date that each step will be accomplished.</i>



Session 8 Attachment F: Closing Meditation

- Reader 1: How is it that life can be? How is it that you and I see and taste and feel and think thoughts? How is it possible? How?
- Reader 2: If one needed miracles to believe in a greater power,
We need only to look around. Life is astounding. It is amazing.
- Reader 1: Look at the fingers of a baby, the hands of an 80-year old
The eyes of a child, the body of a pregnant woman.
- Reader 2: Such beauty, such wonder. So very, very, very sacred.
- Reader 1: To live well is to see this beauty, wonder and sacredness every day.
- Reader 2: And to live well is to be blessed with the conviction to honor the gift of it all.
- Reader 1: To live well is to be blessed with the courage to protect the gift of it all.
- Reader 2: To live well is to live in awe and act with determination.
- Reader 1: And so, we close with this blessing:
- Reader 2: May the God who blew breath in your lungs anoint you with the self-knowledge that your life is precious, that indeed all life is precious.
- Reader 1: May the God who architected your beating heart empower you with the courage to celebrate and hold dear the beating hearts of all people.
- Reader 2: May the God who suffers with us open our hearts to the suffering around us, that we might be a balm for a world distracted and obsessed with lesser things.
- Reader 1: May the God who forgives and makes whole give us wisdom to heal, not demonize; bring together, not tear apart.
- Reader 2: May the God who gifted us with intelligence and thought give us understanding to move forward with insight and integrity.



Reader 1: We pray, in the name and spirit of the Prince of Peace.

Reader 2: Amen.