

GA-1521
(Sense-of-the-Assembly)
SUBSTITUTE RESOLUTION ON GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

WHEREAS the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada seeks to follow Jesus' way of peace making and has committed to become a Pro-Reconciling/ Anti-Racist Church; and

WHEREAS scripture tells us God is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1), Jesus commands us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44), and the Church is called to be one body, making no distinction (Galatians 3:28); and

WHEREAS the United States is suffering from an epidemic of gun violence, with nearly 100,000 people shot and 32,000 dying each year, including more than 17,500 children and teens shot and 2,500 dying;ⁱ and

WHEREAS a litany of tragedy reverberates in our hearts – the names of schools and communities where gun violence has taken innocent lives in numbers hard to comprehend – Columbine, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Aurora, Tucson, while shootings in lesser numbers barely make the headlines in our violence-numbed culture; and

WHEREAS there is a clear, racialized difference in the ways white Americans and Americans of color have been granted the right to bear armsⁱⁱ, and communities of color are much more likely to become victims of gun violenceⁱⁱⁱ, too often at the hands of law enforcement^{iv}, in communities large and small, urban and rural; and

WHEREAS there has been a significant increase in gun violence related deaths of law enforcement officers^v; and

WHEREAS current cultural divides – between geographic regions, across political affiliations, and between racial groups – help perpetuate cultural perceptions of distrust and insecurity, in which a need for physical protection is assumed and guns are promoted as a source of security^{vi}; and

WHEREAS we recognize that a culture of violence, individual exceptionalism and easy access to guns elevate the threat and reality of homicide and suicide, affecting men, women, youth, children and families; and

WHEREAS we understand that the right to own a gun includes social responsibility and is subject to reasonable constraints; and

WHEREAS the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has not explicitly addressed gun violence in a General Assembly within the past 25 years, during which the cultural views on gun control and ownership have grown increasingly polarized:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Columbus, OH, July 18-22, 2015, urge the

many expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to prayerfully examine our collective and individual relationships to a pervasive culture of gun violence, and commit to reconciling the cultural divides that perpetuate it through mutual respect and forgiveness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls on Disciples to model and teach grace-filled, love-based action and non-violent conflict resolution to each other and to our communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls on Disciples to collaborate and engage ~~selectively~~ with individuals and groups, including law enforcement, working to reduce gun violence in the United States and Canada; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Assembly calls on Disciples to promote emergency response plans in the event of an active shooter in our communities, and to assist in response to mass shootings cooperating with local emergency management agencies; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that congregations within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), along with the other expressions of the church, be encouraged to promote dialogue, cooperation, advocacy, and action that moves toward a reduction of gun violence and promotes anti-racist, pro-reconciling education in our communities and nations, and to consider making clear their commitment by openly declaring their properties gun-free zones where state and local laws do not already do so.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in the United States and Canada

ⁱ Brady Campaign, <http://bit.ly/11F2rQg>

ⁱⁱ The history of gun control of guns has historically had a racial component. This includes pre Constitutional, pre Civil War, and Jim Crow era laws; actions by unregulated militia in Reconstruction South who, under a number of names, put a priority on seizing guns held by recently free slaves; and a more recent history of open carry demonstrations employed by both Black Panther Party and TEA Party activists to demonstrate their objection to government intrusion into private lives with racially different responses by legislatures, judges, and law enforcement. See Winkler, Adam, *Gun Fight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, with data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://1.usa.gov/1Dan1Dz>

^{iv} <http://wapo.st/1DABXMO>

^v <http://nbcnews.to/1CGSuJx>

^{vi} Open carry and concealed carry laws are often introduced, supported, and celebrated by politicians and advocates based on a presumption that guns are important and appropriate as protection against undefined dangers. See for example (<http://bit.ly/1PBSc1c> and <http://bit.ly/1FBtEOa>).