

GA-1521
(Sense-of-the-Assembly)
SUBSTITUTE RESOLUTION FROM THE GENERAL BOARD ON GUN VIOLENCE

Two resolutions were submitted on the topic of gun violence. According to 2.5.3 of the Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly (rev. 2011) which state: *“The General Board shall submit a substitute Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution to replace multiple resolutions on the same subject;”* a substitute resolution, in this case written by General Board Small Group 4, will be brought to the plenary in place of the two submitted resolutions.

Should the General Assembly vote to not adopt the substitute resolution, the original resolutions will be brought to the Assembly in the order they were received in accordance with 7.5.4 of the Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly which states: *“If a substitute business item is replacing multiple business items on the same subject and fails, the originals come before the General Assembly in the order in which they were received by the Office of the General Minister and President.”*

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)
GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA
(Received 12/10/2014)

WHEREAS the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada seeks to follow Jesus' way of peace making while surrounded with violence in our homes, in our schools and churches, and in our towns and cities, making no place safe; 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, and in less-publicized individual acts of violence; and

WHEREAS, intimidation, distrust and fear across our great diversity (especially between racial and ethnic groups, and those with differing sexual orientations and gender identities) promote guns as an ultimate source of security, while 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 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, and families as a health issue; and

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

WHEREAS Disciples of Christ have not explicitly addressed gun violence in a General Assembly within the past 25 years, while the National Council of Churches, the United Church of Christ, and other communions have called for action to end gun violence:

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 selectively with individuals and groups working to reduce gun violence in America; and

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

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)
FACING THE DEPTHS OF GUN VIOLENCE
(Received 01/19/2015)

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, among developed countries the US ranks second behind Estonia in per capita homicides; Finland, ranked third, has a rate less than half of that in the US; and the overall rate in other developed countries is less than a quarter of that in the US;ⁱⁱ 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 armsⁱⁱⁱ, and communities of color are much more likely to become victims of gun violence^{iv}, often at the hands of law enforcement; 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^v; and

WHEREAS, scripture tells us that God is our refuge and strength (Psalm 46:1); and

WHEREAS, Jesus commands us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44); and

WHEREAS, the Church is called to be one body, making no distinction of race, nationality, legal status, or gender (Galatians 3:28); and

WHEREAS, the National Council of Churches^{vi} and other communions have called for action in ending gun violence; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has committed to become a pro-reconciling, anti-racist church;

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 manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to prayerfully examine the

pervasiveness of gun violence within our communities; to commit to resisting the cultural perceptions of insecurity that intensify it and to reconciling the divides that perpetuate it; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that congregations within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and all other manifestations, be encouraged to promote dialogue, cooperation, and action that moves toward a reduction of gun violence in our communities and nation, and to consider making clear their commitment by openly declaring their properties gun-free zones, especially where state and local laws do not already do so.

Disciples Peace Fellowship

ⁱ Brady Campaign, www.bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/Gun-Death-Injury-Stat-Sheet-5-Year-Average-2012-Updates-October-2014.pdf

ⁱⁱ Stray, Jonathan, "Gun Violence in America", *The Atlantic*, www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/02/gun-violence-in-america-the-13-key-questions-with-13-concise-answers/272727/

ⁱⁱⁱ 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*.

^{iv} Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, with data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

^v 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 (www.harryreid.com/ee/index.php/sportsmen/rights and www.sfgate.com/news/article/Guns-will-be-allowed-in-national-parks-3259298.php).

^{vi} <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness/2010/gun-violence.php>