



Introduction:

Christ, you wept over a city. We are in deepest despair. As we weep over the killed and injured by guns, in anguish we recognize the blood stains of hatred. We hear the sounds of fear, the echoes of gunshots—once again.

Christ, you came to bring peace. We turn to you in overwhelming sorrow. How can we end this nightmare of violence? How can we build a world of inclusion and solidarity? Give us the grace to reflect deeply and to work ceaselessly to heal the hearts, to stop the gun violence, and to cherish all God's children.

Christ, you endured violent suffering to bring us light. We pray for the dead, that they may rest in peace. We pray for the wounded, that they may find healing. We pray for our nation, that we may put an end to hate. We pray for our global family, that we may learn we are one.

Amen

(Adapted from the Education for Justice)

A Prayer of Confession:

Oh God of all people,
We know that you are as near as our next breath.
Wherever we go, you are already there.
Thank you for creating us in your image and claiming us as your children.

O Lord, we confess that we have forgotten who we are—that each of us belongs to you.
We confess that we have forsaken your peaceable kingdom and allowed gun violence to shatter
our communities.

Forgive us, O God.

Remind us that your love is more powerful than any gun and that your spirit will sustain us as
nothing else can.

Let us desire, as you desire, forgiveness rather than revenge, reconciliation rather than
retribution.

Give us the courage to live, not by the gun but by your spirit.

Open our hearts to you so that we also may open them to each other.

Guide us on the path of peace.

In the name of all who love you, we pray, Amen.

(Adapted from the Vigils Against Violence by Rachel Smith)

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God who loves us so perfectly, help us to better love you and
each other. We weep for the gun violence that kills children and so many
others, where guns replaced prayers and homes without you breed
frustration. May hearts be changed through your Holy Spirit that justice,
mercy, money, and, yes, even guns might be used rightly under Heaven,
through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord.

Amen



Reading:

“Thus says Yahweh: a voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and bitter weeping. Rachel, weeping
for her children, refuses to be comforted, for her children are no more. (Jeremiah 31:15)

Response:

- God, comforter of the broken and disheartened, we come to you plagued with an agonized grief after yet one more outbreak of senseless gun violence.
- We come to you, from the East to the West, from the North to the South, people of all ages, ethnicities, and walks of life.
- We represent one voice—the voice of bitter weeping—echoing throughout our cities and resounding in communities throughout the world.
- As violence abounds, we sit in the darkness, sitting alongside the suffering on the mourner’s bench.
- We are Rachel, mourning with wordless sobs the lives of those sacrificed on the altar of violence.
- We are Rachel, weeping for the wounded, for those whose minds and bodies are etched with painful memories of others’ unjustifiable rage.

- We are Rachel lamenting with the families who have lost loved ones, whose cries of despair join with those from tragedies of gun violence.
- We are Rachel perplexed with troubled souls, searching for answers, seeking to understand what would cause humans to inflict pain on their fellow sisters and brothers.
- We are Rachel, exasperated, grasping—crying out, “How long, O God?” How long will this wave of violence consume your people?

Prayer for Others

Let us remember all who have been harmed by violence.

We acknowledge the strength of those who survived and of those still struggling to heal.

For their sake and for ours, we commit ourselves to building each other up and to healing together.

Let us remember the families and loved ones of those who have died in violent crimes.

We acknowledge their pain and their deep grief.

They, too, are part of our community and need our love and help towards healing.

Let us remember the perpetrators and the families of those who commit violent crimes.

We acknowledge that their lives, too, are devastated and their hopes dashed.

For their sake, and for ours, we remember that pain goes out in many directions from each act of violence.

We will stand up to violence.

We stand together expressing our unity.

We feel our connection to each other and to God.

We stand together expressing our hope for healing and for transformation.

Let the Spirit of our Creator move through us.

Help us to transform and heal our communities.

And let us begin by transforming ourselves.

We go in peace and with hope. AMEN

(Adapted from “Words of Prayer,” www.godnotguns.org)

**WE CAN END
GUN VIOLENCE**

Closing Prayer:

Merciful Lord, we come to you heavy hearted for we have heard the cries of the slain calling to us from the ground. We come remembering all the lives lost to the weapons of war that have flooded our communities. We come reminded of the many bodies locked in jails and prisons all across this country. And we ask for your mercy.

Help us to remember we are all your children, created in your image, and we are connected by a single garment of mutuality and destiny. Reveal to us, O God, that the pain felt in so many places like Newtown, Connecticut, and Florida is the same pain now in both Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas. Teach us your ways, O God. Bless us with the wisdom and strength to put down our swords and be peacemakers. Use us, work through and, if necessary, in spite of us to mend our nation's brokenness.

We thank you for your protecting embrace and unfailing love.
Amen

Learn more about our Corporate Stand and possible actions you can consider, here:

<https://osfphila.imgix.net/media/2019/05/Gun-Control-Corporate-Stand-FINAL.pdf>

