

Advocate to End Gun Violence in Your Community

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only...” - James 1:22

Written by Katie Adams



Photo: Lorie Schauli

Opportunities for Change

As a country we are still reeling from the devastating shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School, and the countless gun deaths that have preceded this moment. Each time something like this happens we ask ourselves, what can we do? It's easy to become mired in the cynicism, especially when it feels and looks like your elected representatives aren't listening; and so it is particularly heartening that the Parkland students, while dealing with unspeakable tragedy have rallied to make *something* happen on gun violence. Their actions are invigorating the debate around gun safety and have already motivated substantial action. And you can be a part of that movement.

Here are some actionable steps you can take to join with these students and demand that Congress takes action to protect school children from gun violence.

What you can do right this minute:

Even as public support for reasonable reform swells, there are some in Congress who are threatening to undermine states' efforts to strengthen their gun safety laws. There is concern that the Senate may attach the [Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017](#) to any positive legislation that might be advanced. This bill would force states with strong concealed-carry permit requirements to recognize permits issued by states with more lax permit requirements.

You can send a message to your Senators right now. Tell them to oppose concealed carry reciprocity: <http://p2a.co/NaSjw71>

Background

The United Church of Christ has worked for more than 20 years to end the plague of gun violence in America – with our General Synod advocating for sensible, responsible gun policies and legislation in three resolutions passed in 1995, and urging the recognition of gun violence as a public health concern in need of scientific research by the CDC and NIH just last year.

More information on those resolutions, and worship and bible study resources can be found at ucc.org/gun-violence.



Take your advocacy to the next level:

Arrange an In-Person Meeting

Calls and emails are great - the greater the volume, the greater the attention legislators pay to the issue. But another meaningful way to advocate for gun safety is to request an in-person meeting with your Member of Congress in one of their district offices or in Washington D.C. By taking the time to meet with a Member or their staff you are showing them how important the issue is to you. This is a chance for you to share your story, ask how your Member specifically plans to move forward to keep school children safe, and urge them to take action. After the meeting be sure to follow up with them thanking them for their time and reiterating your request.

Look up your elected officials here: <http://p2a.co/Nmw4YqN>

Write a Letter to the Editor

A sharply written letter to the editor has a bigger impact than you might think. If you specifically mention your Member of Congress by name, their staff will bring the article to their attention. This is another powerful way to let your legislator know what you think, and it can also inspire other people in your community to get involved.

Start by identifying yourself and your connection to the community. Express that, as a person of faith, speaking out against gun violence is one of the ways you live out Christ's commandment to love our neighbors. Then talk about why you care about this issue. This is your chance to talk about how gun violence has affected you and your community and why it is so important for Congress to take action.

Join the March for Our Lives

On March 24 the students of Stoneman Douglas are hosting a [march in Washington to end gun violence](#). There are a number of sister marches being organized around the country in concert with the one in D.C.

If you are coming to DC, let our Washington Office know so they can loop you in on any UCC specific updates: ucc.org/ucc_at_march_for_our_lives

Host a Postcard Party

Write postcards to your member of congress asking them to not support the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act and to take substantial action to prevent gun violence. This can be something you do with friends or a youth group.

Hold a Bible Study about Gun Violence

The UCC has developed a bible study looking at faithful responses to curb gun violence in our communities called [Faith vs. Fear](#). This is a resource you or your church can use to enter into conversations about how as people of faith we are called to be a part of the effort to end gun violence.

Find this and other resources via ucc.org/gun-violence