



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

December 4, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We write with heavy hearts. Once again our country is shaken with the horrific news of another mass shooting, this one in San Bernardino last Wednesday where fourteen people were killed and over twenty injured. We decry any and all violence that is perpetrated on innocent victims whether in San Bernardino, Colorado Springs, Paris, or Syria. We pray for the victims of the shooting in San Bernardino, their families and loved ones, and we give thanks for the heroic and selfless offering of first responders, police, firefighters, and medical workers who attended to the wounded and dying.

The shooting this week comes as we approach the third anniversary of the tragedy at Sandy Hook, where twenty-eight children and adults died from gun violence on December 14, 2012. We note that San Bernardino is the largest mass shooting in the United States since the Sandy Hook tragedy. It reminds us of the pain and suffering that we in Connecticut felt, and continue to feel, whenever guns result in the death of innocent people.

Yet the senseless killing seems to continue unabated. According to the Washington Post, the shooting in San Bernardino is the 355th mass shooting in the United States this year; and it was not the only mass shooting on Wednesday as one person was killed and three others injured in Savannah, Georgia, earlier that day. In addition, each year over 30,000 Americans are killed by gun violence, close to 60% of these victims at their own hand.

This kind of gun violence has got to end. Citizens in the United States, over 90% of whom favor universal background checks for gun purchases, need to work with our political officials to help make our country safe from gun violence. And we Christians must stand up and state publicly that the senseless killing of any person, each created in the image of God, is contrary to the Gospel and our faith in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

As bishops of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut we invite each and every one of our 169 parishes and worshipping communities to join in the third annual Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath on Sunday December 13, the day before the 3rd anniversary of the Sandy Hook tragedy. Information on the Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath is available from Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence (<http://www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org> and <http://www.marchsabbath.org>) and from Bishops United Against Gun Violence (<http://bishopsagainstgunviolence.org>). In addition, we include below for your parish's use a litany written by the Rt. Rev. Stephen T. Lane, Episcopal Bishop of Maine, for the Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath.

We ask that you please let us know how you and your parish and/or worshipping community plan to participate in Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath. We will attempt to share ideas and resources as we receive them with the wider Episcopal Church in Connecticut through our website: www.episcopalct.org.

May your Advent be filled with the hope and expectation that the coming birth of Jesus, God with us, will bring about a new reign of peace in our nation and in the world. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas
Bishop Diocesan

The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens
Bishop Suffragan