

At its 137th Convention in October 2024 the Episcopal Church in Colorado passed the resolution *On Reducing and Preventing Gun Violence*.

Following is the text of the resolution:

Title of Resolution: On Reducing and Preventing Gun Violence

Whereas, as followers of Jesus, we are called to be peacemakers, tasked with building a beloved community for all;

Whereas, as followers of Jesus, we are called to be healers of minds, bodies, and spirits, to bind up the wounds of those hurt by violence;

Whereas, as followers of Jesus, we are called to be listeners, to hear God's word and feel God's presence in our world and fellow human beings, even in times of great disagreement;

Whereas, as followers of Jesus, we are called to advocate for justice and challenge the wrongs of the powerful, including the people of our own nation and communities;

Whereas, as followers of Jesus, we are called to sacrifice for love,

Whereas, in July 2000, the 73rd General Convention passed a resolution expressing deep concern about the repeated use of easily available handguns and assault weapons by and against children and call upon Episcopalians to seek ways to develop community strategies and create sanctuaries for our children, so that all may come to identify and value themselves and others as the precious children of God that they are, and that they may come to know peace in their lives and to create peace for future generations.

Whereas, in July 2012, the 77th General Convention passed a resolution asking all parishes and diocesan workplaces to declare themselves gun-free zones.

Whereas, in July 2015, the 78th General Convention passed a resolution urging legislators to implement laws to help decrease gun violence through permitting procedures, banning certain weapons, and regulating the trade and transfer of guns.

Whereas, in July 2018, the 79th General Convention recognized gun violence as a public health crisis, urging Congress to repeal the Dickey Amendment limiting funding for gun violence research, and encouraging advocacy for research into the impact of gun violence on public health.

Whereas, the 2023 Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Survey results indicate that the most common cause of death involving a firearm in Colorado is suicide, which accounted for 75% of all firearm-involved fatalities, and homicide accounted for 20% of all firearm-involved fatalities between 2017-2021.

Whereas, in Fall 2023, the Rt. Rev. Kym Lucas, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Colorado, identified Gun Violence Prevention as the "fifth reality" of "devastating brokenness in our communities and world that require healing and reconciliation in order that all people may live

in justice and peace”, and in February 2024 released a pastoral letter to the Diocese requesting congregations discern specific actions they could take on behalf of gun violence prevention.

Be it resolved that A.) in keeping with our baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of every human being and to minimize the impact of gun violence, the 137th Annual Convention commits to urge state and federal legislators to sponsor and support the passage of laws to:

1. Require universal background checks for every gun purchase, including private sales, sales at gun shows, and ghost guns;
2. Prohibit for civilians the purchase, sale, transfer, or possession of semi-automatic, military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, as has been enacted in the past;
3. Require persons to provide evidence of reputable gun safety training before purchasing a gun;
4. Promote local and federal funding to research the causes and prevention of gun violence and for expansion of community violence prevention programs; and

Be it further resolved that B.) the congregations and diocesan institutions of the Episcopal Church in Colorado be strongly urged to:

1. Create safe spaces in church and institutions by developing formal congregational policies on gun possession during worship and on church property. In these policies, emphasize our trust in God and for any persons the church permits to be armed that they be professionally trained, and that they provide specific notice to church leaders of their presence.
2. Listen closely to those hurt by violence in congregations and communities. Create safe spaces for sharing stories of past trauma and look out for those who may consider selfharm; in these ways, work to HEAL our people; and
3. Learn about violence prevention, including Extreme Risk Protection Orders to prevent harm by people in crisis, programs for the safe storage of guns and by about the work of other community organizations such as Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence (CFCU).

Be it further resolved that C.) all members of the Episcopal Church in Colorado be encouraged to:

1. Store guns and ammunition safely and securely at all times in accordance with Colorado Statute 18-12-114;
2. Teach and practice gun safety;
3. Seek and share accurate information on gun violence prevention, including the availability of mental health resources and support for community violence intervention groups in your community.

Rationale

How will the resolution build up and strengthen one or more of the marks of mission: proclamation, discipleship, and servanthood?

Passage of this resolution will 1) raise awareness that as followers of Christ we are also called to be peacemakers, advocates for justice, and healers for those in our congregations and communities wounded by gun violence, 2) raise up and strengthen discipleship as we endeavor to seek out, gather and listen to those with different experiences with guns and gun violence, and 3) strengthen diocesan, congregational and personal servanthood, empowering all to do what we can to reduce and prevent the effects of the gun violence and safeguard the integrity of our families and communities.

Who will be impacted by the resolution, and how?

The resolution impacts all congregations and their surrounding communities within the diocese, especially those whose families and communities have been adversely affected by gun violence. By raising awareness of actions that can be taken at the legislative, congregational, and personal levels to reduce and prevent gun violence, lives can be saved

How will the resolution be enacted, including an estimated time frame for enacting the resolution? Who is responsible for enacting the resolution? Who will be accountable? Against which criteria will it be evaluated (how will we know it's been done), and specifically, how long will implementation take?

Following God's call to care for God's people, this ongoing work will be encouraged and supported by the diocesan Gun Violence Prevention Team. The Team in conjunction with diocesan leadership will develop resources for congregations and institutions for developing their own policies. A page on the diocesan website is currently dedicated to listing resources available to congregations and individuals interested in gun violence prevention, and it will be updated on a regular basis as additional resources become available.

Are there budgetary implications? What is the source of funding? It should include a cost estimate and detail the source.

There are no budgetary implications or requirements for funding to implement this resolution. There is no expectation of funding from the diocese for this resolution.

What is the impact of time and workload on diocesan staff, congregations, and other responsible parties?

Congregation resources of time and talent will be offset by the benefits experienced by their parishes and respective communities.