A Letter to the Members of the Alliance of Baptists

We are sharing this letter with members and friends of our church, and made the decision to share this with you, the leaders of the Alliance of Baptists and also the United Church of Christ. The youth of Harmony Creek Church, Dayton, Ohio have met several times to share concerns and ideas that ought to be lifted up. We, the youth, believe that our church and its affiliated denominations need to publicly stand up and support youth in any efforts to help enhance progress in the social climate, especially when it comes to gun violence in schools. Could our denominations really embrace the concept of teaching ways to help parents raise their kids with more empathy and compassion? Is there a way to have more direct communication with everyone in all of our churches of resources to help us better understand the issues surrounding youth in crisis who really need help?

When our youth group first met on the topic, we first asked what comes to mind when you think about the recent shootings in Florida? The following are quotes from our conversations:

"Here we are … and what we see is: it's just another school shooting."
"There is a cycle: we grieve, we argue, nothing changes."
"It's pretty sad that we are now standing up to the government."
"..wanting to do something, not what others are telling us to do."
"With the internet and media: it's always in our face."
"Some of us believe that the shootings have been blown out of proportion by the media."
"We have a mental illness crisis in this country."
"We risk our lives every day when we go to school."
"Too many kids in this country go to school wondering if this day might be their last. It shouldn't have to be that way."
"This has gone on too long, and the older generation hasn't done enough to help until our generation has started to become part of the newsfeed almost every day as the result of the shooting in Parkland, Florida."
In our discussions, many different areas of concern came up. We feel you need to hear what we have to say: It's not just one concern or another. It's a combination of all of the concerns or as some may suggest “things.”. It’s the gun thing. It’s the mental health thing. It’s the God thing. It’s the parent thing. It’s the internet thing. It’s the bullying thing. It’s the technology thing. It’s the violent media thing. It’s the racial thing. It’s the instant supervision thing. It’s the no supervision thing. It’s all of the things or concerns that need to be addressed.

While we waste time arguing about which one of the “things” it is that causes the school shooting instances to grow in number and severity — all of the things are coming together to create our next door neighbor, student, classmate, and coworker. We need to be asking these questions: How are we contributing to improve the world that is creating those students? What can we, as a church, do? What can the Alliance of Baptists do?

We would like to explore avenues that we can work on together. We do not have the answers, but we are hoping to see some action take place by the denominations that represent Harmony Creek Church. Is there something we as youth can participate in? What guidance would be helpful as these subject matters are discussed at the local level as well as the regional and national level? Are there ways to share ideas, suggestions, programs, etc. that not only bring awareness, but show positive results when used? We believe there’s been a lot of talk. We need to see some positive progress that makes sense, that gives hope, that involves everyone working at it together. We hope that you would embrace our concerns. You are the adults. You’re the ones supposed to be ensuring our safety.

Sincerely,

The Youth Group of Harmony Creek Church
Dayton, Ohio