A Statement on Resisting Violence
Alliance of Baptists — Annual Meeting
Portland, Maine • May 3, 2014

In 2012, the Alliance of Baptists adopted a statement against gun violence. At that time, we committed ourselves to live out our Mission Statement to “work for peace” by adding our organizational voice in support of efforts to reduce gun violence. Sadly, since we adopted that statement more people have been killed or injured by gun violence.

In December 2012, 20 students and six adults were killed in Newtown, Conn., in the space of less than five minutes when 156 shots were fired. In an analysis issued in February 2014, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America noted that in the 14 months after the shootings at Newtown, there were at least 44 school shootings including fatal and nonfatal assaults, suicides, and unintentional shootings — an average of more than three each month. These school shootings resulted in 28 deaths and 37 nonfatal gunshot injuries1.

Each day in the U.S. more than 100 Americans die of gunshot by accident, suicide or murder. The U.S. experiences 20 times the gun homicides than countries that are our international peers. Data indicate that it is 22 times more likely that guns in homes are used in domestic violence, suicide, or unintentional shooting than in self-defense. Domestic violence incidents are significantly more likely to turn lethal when a gun is present 2.

In the 16 states with required background checks for all handgun sales, fewer women are shot to death by their intimate partner, fewer people kill themselves with guns, and fewer law enforcement officers are killed by handguns. In states where fingerprint-based background checks are required, even more lives are saved3.

Participants at the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days, an advocacy partner of the Alliance of Baptists, asked their members of Congress to reduce the acquisition and use of guns for purposes that cause harm. EAD 2014 literature noted that the media has helped us to see the tragedies of killings and injuries in schools, theaters and shopping centers. But the media clarifies less that people are killed or maimed each day by guns on our streets and left carelessly around our homes, or used in suicide. EAD does not advocate that all guns be banned. Rather EAD supports legislation that will make it harder for people with hostile intentions to buy guns and easier for the community stakeholders to adequately prevent them from doing harm4.

As people of faith, we recognize the need to curtail the escalation of violence due to the widespread possession and use of guns.

Today we — the Alliance of Baptists — join with other faith communities that are part of Ecumenical Advocacy Days and encourage Congress to adopt legislation that reduces the acquisition and use of guns for purposes that cause harm. Specifically, we support legislation that includes provisions that:

1. Close loopholes in gun sales and trafficking laws;
2. Limit the ammunition capacity and public sale of semi-automatic firearms with detachable magazines;

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
3. Limit the acquisition of guns by persons with a documented history of violence or diagnosed with severe mental illnesses and demonstrated violent behavior;
4. Collect data on the number of deaths and injuries by guns in the U.S. (whether accident, suicide or violent intent);
5. Mandate keeping guns secured in lockboxes, safes, or the like; and

There is no shortage of proposed legislation in Congress that can reduce gun violence. We support legislation such as:

a. Gun Show Loophole Closing Act of 2013 (H.R. 141) and the Gun Trafficking Prevention Act (H.R. 452/S. 179);
b. Assault Weapons Ban of 2013 (H.R. 437/S. 150);
c. Fix Gun Checks Act of 2013 (H.R. 37/S.374);
d. Firearms Safety and Public Health Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 452) and To Require the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service to submit to Congress and Annual Report on the Effects of Gun Violence on Public Health (H.R. 2465);
e. Secure Firearms Act of 2013 (H.R. 1883); Youth Promise Act (H.R. 1318) or Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education Act (S. 1307);
f. Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act of 2013 (Toomey-Manchin) (S. 649).

Today we — the Alliance of Baptists — recommit ourselves in our congregations and as individual members to educate ourselves on gun violence and to advocate for legislation that will reduce death and injury from gun violence.

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With thanks for the information included in this statement obtained from:
Ecumenical Advocacy Days (www.advocacydays.org);
Moms Demand Action (https://momsdemandaction.org/);
Faiths United To Prevent Gun Violence (http://faithsagainstgunviolence.org/)

More information can also be found at:
Heeding God’s Call: http://heedinggodscall.org/
Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence: http://bradycampaign.org/

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