



# Gun Violence Prevention

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

WEAR ORANGE SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2023

## OPENING PRAYERS

*Celebrant* Lord, make us instruments of your peace;

*All* ***Where there is hatred, let us sow love;***

*Celebrant* Where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;

*All* ***Where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.***

*Celebrant* O Divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

*All* ***to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.***

## LIGHTING OF THE FLAME OF PEACE

*Leader* We kindle this flame as a symbol of hope and peace. May it burn not only in this place but also in our hearts. May its light dispel the shadow from before our path that we may see clearly the road that is ahead. May it be a reminder that hope is a flame that can never be extinguished.

*All* ***We stand together in hope. We stand together in faith. We stand together in love. We stand individually as ambassadors of hope, vessels of faith, and sentinels of love. We stand as a community committed to making no peace with gun violence. We pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to inflame and enkindle our lives, our churches, our communities, our cities, and our nation with a passion for lasting peace; through Jesus Christ the Author of Peace. Amen.***

Let us pray:

Inspire us, o God, with the gift of shalom, the gift of wholeness and the promise of your presence. Give us wisdom to seek nonviolence as an answer to the violence of our lives and world. Give us courage to seek wholeness in a fractured and divided world, to find reconciliation rather than revenge, to abandon the instruments of violence and death and entrust our lives, our homes and our families to you. May your presence fill us and others with the thirst for unity, wholeness, and the desire to see all people valued as created in your image. May we and others receive your Shalom that we might be faithful instruments of your love. Amen.

(Adapted from Episcopal Peace Fellowship, "Gift of Shalom")

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** *(with lighting of candles for each prayer)*

FOR VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle as we call to mind the many victims of gun violence, those who have lost their lives, those who have lost their livelihood, and those who have lost life's passion. We pray especially for those who have been killed [here in City or State] and we hold their stories and their memories dear. May their loss not be in vain, and may we shape a new story of hope from the broken pieces of grief. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY OF GUN VIOLENCE VICTIMS

*Leader* We light this candle to stand with those who have been left behind, the families, friends, and loves ones of those taken by gun violence. We pray that in this time of heartbreak, grief, and loss that they might find comfort and hope to face the days ahead, and that their tears may be turned into songs of joy. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

FOR COMMUNITIES TORN BY GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle to tell the story of homes, communities, neighborhoods, cities and town shattered by gun violence. We call the time the sacred ground around our nation that has been watered with the blood of loss and the tears of grief. [We especially remember *specific cities and towns may be named* here.] Grant that we may work tirelessly towards a vision where all may sit under their own vine and fig tree in safety and security. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

*Leader* We light this candle to stand with first responders, those who live with the horror of gun violence in service to the common good. We stand with them and their families as they heal from bearing witness to the aftermath of lives ended in violence. Grant that we, with them, may create a world where all are protected, all are honored and all are seen, valued and beloved. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

FOR SUICIDE & UNINTENTIONAL SHOOTINGS

*Leader* We light this candle to remember those who ended their lives at their own hands with a gun, those who lost their lives by unintentional shootings, and those children whose promise of life was cut short. We pray that we may be strength to those in despair, hope in those in desolation, and comfort to those in misery. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

FOR THOSE WHO FEEL HELPLESS IN THE FACE OF GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle in solidarity with those who feel helpless, dejected, or powerless in the face of the gun violence epidemic. We know that gun violence touches all cultures, classes, genders, races, tribes, and nations. We pray that we may not be overwhelmed by gun violence but that we may overwhelm the world with the violence of love. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

#### FOR THE PERPETRATORS OF GUN VIOLENCE

*Leader* We light this candle for perpetrators of gun violence. We pray for their families, their friends, and those who love them. We pray for those who see no other way than violence. We pray for those who suffer from mental illness, social isolation, loneliness, and debilitating fear. Grant that we may reach out in love and transform ferocity into friendship and fear into faith. And so we pray,

*All* ***God of sacred stories, heal us and make us whole.***

#### FOR OURSELVES & FOR OTHERS

*Leader* We light this candle to pray for ourselves and others in our lives who have been touched by gun violence. During the silent pause, we invite you to offer their names either silently or aloud. *Silence is kept for a time.* Together we pray.

*All* ***God of the Weary, God of the Hopeful, mend that which is wounded, bind up that which is broken, soothe that which is shattered. Enliven us with courage, passion, and strength to renew and recreate our world in the likeness of lasting peace; through the One who comes with healing and hope; Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.***

*Leader* A single water drop has the power to shape even the hardest stone. A single act of hope has the power to inspire a world to be transformed. A single light has the power to dispel even the deepest gloom. Together we embody the power to transform our world into a place where gun violence is no more.

*Candle is lit from the Flame of Peace:*

*Leader* As we share the light from this single flame, may these candles be a symbol of our burning hope and our shining light. That we may act out of hope and compassion to remove the disease of gun violence from our midst. Let your light shine.

*(The light is passed from the single flame to the congregation.)*

*Hymn:* e.g. "Make me a channel of your peace" or "Peace if flowing like a river"

#### THE BLESSING

May God bless you with hope, that your life and actions may re-ignite the flame of possibility in all you meet.

May God bless you with dreams, that your vision may be a fire that transforms the world.

May God bless you with courage, so that your faith may boldly proclaim the reign of the Prince of Peace. And may the blessing....

#### THE SENDING

*Deacon* Go into the world. Be of Good Cheer. Hold fast that which is good. Render to no one evil for evil. Support the weak. Honor everyone. Respect the dignity of every human being. Go into the world that together we can be advocates of hope and agents of peace. God in peace. Go in hope. Go in love.

*People* ***Thanks be to God.***