



the  
episcopal diocese  
of san diego

fearless love

December 9, 2015

Beloved in Christ,

Over the weekend, faith communities across the country will observe a Sabbath for Gun Violence, December 10-14. The tragedy in our nation is 400 people will be killed by guns during this period. As I have written before, our national addiction to guns is part of a culture that romanticizes violence: think of our Sunday gladiators on the football field, violence on TV, film, and in video games. As followers of the Prince of Peace, we must repent of this behavior and actively participate in change.

We must go to the core of who we are and what Jesus teaches. We are those who preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near. We love our enemies. We turn the other cheek. We respect the dignity of every human being.

I submit to you that it is past time for this church to take active responsibility for its complicity with violence. As a next step, we must call on our elected representatives to develop reasonable and sane gun control. We will disagree about what should be done. But each day lives are lost. There is no reason that the U.S. should have 30,000 gun deaths per year in comparison to Canada's 200 per year (adjusted for population, this means that the U.S. has more than five times the number of gun homicides each year). This is a moral issue that demands a response from the church.

We must press for discussion, debate and action. People are needlessly dying.

I urge you to make gun control advocacy a part of your spiritual work. If you disagree with me, I simply ask for your prayers and thoughtful engagement in the debate. In the end, what we strive to do is participate in bringing the prophetic words of Isaiah to fruition, that: "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

I commend to you the litany written by my friend and colleague, the Rt. Rev. Stephen Lane, bishop of Maine: [A Litany for the Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath](#). Additional information on the Gun Violence Sabbath is available here: [National Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend](#).

I pray that your days may be gentle and safe. Be at peace.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James R. Mathes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

The Rt. Rev. James R. Mathes  
Bishop