



NATIONAL CLERGY **GUN VIOLENCE** DISCUSSION GUIDE





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INTRODUCTION

Now more than ever, our country needs faith leaders to play an active and leading role in combating the gun violence epidemic that's plaguing all major cities across the United States and its territories.

Clergy for Safe Cities is a coalition established to support clergy-based gun violence prevention initiatives and implement a collective, comprehensive, community initiative to decrease the involvement of young people in gangs, crimes, and gun violence in your city.

This holistic approach will bring together committed partnerships with the requisite resources and mobilize strong community support in our diverse neighborhoods to build safe and healthy communities across America and across the world. The coalition is guided by the moral principle that public safety is a shared responsibility with the belief that your active participation and the involvement of clergy will be pivotal in helping to address this scourge.

This Discussion Guide was developed to help you get started with your own clergy or faith-based group. The first section provides the Overview of the State of Gun Violence in America. The second section contains the Framework on Best Practices taken from across the U.S. with questions to guide you through the process as you prepare to embark on this important work. The final section introduces our Clergy Protocol Guide and Prevention Toolkit which are cutting-edge tools that will serve as a powerful resource for Clergy For Safe Cities coalition members.

Our ultimate prayer and goal is to restore, heal, connect, recover, and empower our cities to exist without violence. All we need to end gun violence in America is faith that it can be done, the will to act, and the tools to bring about change. Journey with us as we utilize the resources to effectively eradicate the epidemic, care for our neighborhoods, and create safe cities. It can be done. It will be done. It must be done.

In partnership and faith,
Pastor Gil Monroe
Convener, Clergy for Safe Cities



FOUNDING COALITION MEMBERS

- **Pastor Gil Monrose**, *President, 67th Precinct Clergy Council, “The GodSquad”, Brooklyn*
- **Pastor Corey B. Brooks**, *CEO, Project H.O.O.D. Chicago*
- **Rev. Jeffrey Brown**, *President, Rebuilding Every Community Around Peace (RECAP), Boston*
- **Rev. Ciera Walker-Chamberlain**, *Executive Director, Live Free Chicago*
- **Bishop Kelvin L. Cobaris**, *Cobaris Ministries, Orlando*
- **Pastor Delonte Gholston**, *Lead Organizer, Peace Walk DC, Washington, DC*
- **Teny Gross**, *Executive Director, Institute for NonViolence Chicago*
- **Pastor Charles Harrison**, *President, Ten Point Coalition, Indianapolis*
- **Pastor Michael McBride**, *Director, LIVE FREE Campaign with Faith In Action, Los Angeles*
- **Pastor Devin Turner**, *Founder, Justice and Equality Inc., Washington, DC*
- **Dr. Wendy Coram-Violet**, *Director, Center for the Study of Spirituality and Professionalism at the University of the Virgin Islands*
- **Councilman Willie Lightfoot**, *Chairman, ROC Against Gun Violence Coalition, Rochester, NY*



OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

Every day in America, more than 100 people are killed by guns and more than 230 people sustain a nonfatal gun injury. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly two-thirds of gun deaths are suicides and one-third are homicides. The suicide rate in the U.S. is 10 times that of other high-income countries and the gun homicide rate is 25 times that of other high-income countries. Research also shows that White men represent 74 percent of firearm suicide victims in America while Black Americans represent the majority of gun homicide victims. In fact, Black Americans are 10 times more likely than White Americans to die by gun homicide.

Across the country, the most vulnerable populations of gun violence are communities of color, women, children, and teens. Women in the U.S. are 21 times more likely to be killed with a gun than women in other high-income countries. Firearms have been identified by the CDC as the leading cause of death for American children and teens. More than 1,700 children and teens die by gun homicide every year. Black children and teens are 14 times more likely than White children and teens of the same age to die by gun homicide.

In 2020, the U.S. experienced the collision of two major public health crises: COVID-19 and gun violence. In the midst of a global pandemic and nationwide protests against police brutality and racial inequality, major cities across the country saw patterns of gun violence rise drastically. Inner-city communities such as Brooklyn, New York saw successive mass shootings in a single month. Philadelphia saw a 40% increase in gun violence in comparison with 2019. Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Kansas City, and unfortunately many more have set record numbers for homicides for the year.



MASS SHOOTINGS IN THE U.S. IN 2020

As of December 6, 2020, the total is 589

JANUARY	25	JULY	88
FEBRUARY	20	AUGUST	79
MARCH	25	SEPTEMBER	67
APRIL	26	OCTOBER	51
MAY	61	NOVEMBER	50
JUNE	95	DECEMBER	2

There were 391 mass shootings by this date in 2019

The impact of gun violence is also far reaching. *Everytown Research & Policy* found that 58 percent of American adults or someone they care for have experienced gun violence in their lifetime and approximately three million American children witness gun violence every year. This has left many families and communities traumatized.

These staggering numbers should mobilize all of us to action. Now, more than ever before, we must unify our cities to put an end to senseless shootings and help build safer and healthier cities.

As members of Clergy For Safe Cities, we will continue to be on the frontline in the fight against gun violence. Our coalition partners have never backed down and continue to work tirelessly in their cities to help lead the response to the gun violence epidemic. At the last National Gun Violence Prevention Summit, they shared detailed accounts of their work and discussed how they've acted as visionaries for change during the unprecedented "Summer of George Floyd."

Our ultimate prayer and goal is to restore, heal, connect, recover, and empower our community to exist without violence. Now is the time for action. Join this powerful movement of clergy today.



FRAMEWORK FOR AMERICA

Our Framework for America on reducing gun violence is practiced through multiple battle-tested models with faith-based partnerships and a variety of community engagement tactics. We recognize that there is no single strategy that will be most effective in all cities and communities across the country. Hence we are not promoting any model as being preferred over another. Our best practices that we cover are based on three main pillars:

1. The Role of Faith: How Do We Teach and Preach on Gun Violence?
2. The Hidden Effects of Gun Violence on Communities and Families
3. Our Prophetic Voice in Response to Social Injustice and Police Reform

Establishing Clergy Groups

Spending time in advance to establish your mission will make your community participation more meaningful. Here are some discussion questions to help guide you through that process:

1. What is the current vision of your organization?
2. How has gun violence affected the relational health between your community and law enforcement?
3. How should faith leaders work to prevent gun violence within my city?
4. What do you believe is the role of faith when dealing with gun violence?
5. What do street-level engagement and on the ground outreach look like to you?
6. What are some faith-based best practices you have seen in your city?

Troubleshooting

1. Do you have a point person to relay any questions?
 - a. It's okay if you don't have the answers for everything. If you have questions or need further guidance as you get started, reach out to info@clergyforsafecities.org.
2. Do you have a database?
 - a. You cannot do this work alone! As you network, build a resourceful database. It is important to always note the contact information of interesting people you meet.



Action Plan

It is important to evaluate your organization's performance and create an action plan. Here are some discussion questions to guide you and ultimately uncover the hidden effects gun violence has on your community:

1. How has the recent surge in gun violence impacted your city?
2. In response to the recent spike in gun violence in your city, what has your organization done on the ground to engage your community?
3. As a faith leader, how can you be more proactive and effective in your service to survivors and perpetrators of gun violence and their families?
4. Based on the shared battle-tested methods, how can your organization provide more effective support to those who have been directly impacted by gun violence?
5. From your perspective on the ground, what creates the conditions for these types of incidents to occur generally and currently in this moment?
6. What does healing from this type of trauma look like?
7. What issues have not yet been addressed by your organization that you believe should be considered based on today's presentations?
8. How do you think your organization can best implement the ideas shared?
9. Do you believe your organization's vision best reflects the needs of the community?
If not, how can it be changed?
10. What tools or resources do you need to help you respond more effectively in your city?



CUTTING-EDGE TOOLS

Clergy Protocol Guide and Prevention Toolkit

Over the past two decades, clergy leaders from across the country have responded to numerous calls concerning gunshot victims and their families by supporting them with hospital visits, counseling sessions, prayer vigils, community walks, gun violence forums, and funeral services. We have taken our battle-tested strategies and best practices and created a practical, cutting-edge Prevention Toolkit to help you navigate the complexities when dealing with families affected by the tragedy of gun violence.

Upon your completion of training as a member of Clergy for Safe Cities, we will share with you the Protocol Guide published by our coalition member, the 67th Precinct Clergy Council, Inc., "The GodSquad". As a faith leader, this guide will help you provide clergy care to families of gun violence in a professional, caring, and spiritual way. The goal and life's work of Clergy For Safe Cities is to reduce the violence in the communities in which we serve as pastors and faith leaders and help families heal from the trauma associated with the tragic loss.

The GodSquad has been proactive in their approach in handling survivors and families. This experienced clergy team skillfully ministers to families in need of a loving, caring, and strong hand of support as they continue to serve as bridge builders between cops, community, and congregations.

As you read through these resources, we hope that you will find the information useful and impactful to your work of caring for families in need in your city. As you know, we are called to serve those in dire need and at the most vulnerable times of their lives. We believe that these resources will actively encourage you to make a notable impact on these families' lives as you serve the city that you support, love, and cherish.



To join the coalition or to download the discussion guide and prevention tool-kit, visit www.clergyforsafecities.org.

To request printed copies, contact the publisher:

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