

Whereas, on May 24th, 2022, an 18 year old entered Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas and murdered 19 elementary school children and 2 teachers; and

Whereas, on May 18th, 2022, an 18 year old entered the Tops Market in Buffalo, New York and murdered 10 African-American people; and

Whereas these events are only two of the 213 mass shootings that have taken place in the United States in the first 145 days of 2022; and

Whereas, mass shootings have been occurring across the United States with alarming frequency over the past 23 years, from places such as schools in Columbine and Newtown and Parkland, to a movie theater in Aurora, to a nightclub in Orlando, to houses of worship like the Tree of Life Synagogue and Mother Emanuel AME Church; and

Whereas the 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions states that “as followers of Jesus,... we must address the epidemic of gun violence” and calls on “United Methodist to prayerfully address gun violence in their local context,” and

Whereas the May 25, 2022 statement from the United Methodist Council of Bishops calls on the church to “move from words to actions,” and “actively work to transform lives from violence to peace, elect officials that will not settle for inaction, and inject communities with the grace and love of Christ that will alter the course of our current behaviors;”\

THEREFORE, the Tennessee Western Kentucky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church calls on President Joe Biden, U.S. Senators Marsha Blackburn, Bill Haggerty, Mitch McConnell, and Rand Paul; Governors Bill Lee and Andy Beshear; as well as other members of local, state, and U.S. governments to implement specific laws at the local, state, and national level that prevent or reduce gun violence. Specifically, we call on these representatives to implement the following measures as listed in resolution #3428 in the 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions:

Universal background checks on all gun purchases;

Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty;

Ensuring all guns are sold through licensed gun retailers;

Prohibiting all individuals convicted of violent crimes from purchasing a gun for a fixed time period;

Prohibiting all individuals under restraining order due to threat of violence from purchasing a gun;

Prohibiting persons with serious mental illness, who pose a danger to themselves and their communities, from purchasing a gun;

Ensuring greater access to services for those suffering from mental illness;

Establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession;

Banning large-capacity ammunition magazines and weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled; and

Promoting new technologies to aid law-enforcement agencies to trace crime guns and promote public safety.

FURTHERMORE, the Tennessee Western Kentucky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church calls on all United Methodist churches, clergy, and laity, in the words of Bishop Bickerton, “to find a way to keep these stories on the front page of our consciousness and let nothing detract from our commitment to curb violence, fight for justice, end systemic racism, elect politicians with courage, deeply listen to those who have been harmed, and genuinely seek the power of the Holy Spirit to lift us from this posture of paralysis into a mode of action.” This includes standing in solidarity with communities who have experienced gun violence, preaching against a culture of violence, and making conscious efforts to dismantle systems of oppression.