



**WILLIAM T. McALILLY, RESIDENT BISHOP**

August 9, 2022

To: President Biden and Senators Blackburn, Hagerty, Paul, and McConnell; and Governors Lee and Beshear

From: Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference of The United Methodist Church

Dear President Biden,

Recently, a senseless act of gun violence took the life of Rev. Dr. Autura Eason-Williams, a beloved United Methodist pastor, District Superintendent, mentor, friend, wife, and mother in Memphis, Tennessee. Her name is added to the list of over 24,000 Americans whose lives have been cut short by gunshot wounds this year alone. The grief we feel over her loss is nearly unbearable, as it is for all those who have lost a loved one to gun violence. But our grief must not paralyze us—it must move us to do all in our power to ensure these losses don't continue at their current staggering rate.

Last month, pastors and lay leaders from every United Methodist church in our area gathered to worship, pray, celebrate, and articulate our vision and mission. These leaders represented over 162,000 United Methodists from 850 churches in Western and Middle Tennessee and Western Kentucky. During our time together, these leaders overwhelmingly passed a motion calling on our politicians to enact meaningful gun control legislation and calling our churches to do everything in their power to reduce the scourge of gun violence in our country. We had no idea that within a month, the tragic effects of gun violence would take the life of one of the persons in that very room.

While we applaud the bi-partisan federal gun violence legislation that was recently signed into law, we do not believe it goes far enough. As part of the several key proposals in our motion, which are drawn from our denomination's Book of Resolutions, we specifically call on you to establish a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession and to ban large-capacity ammunition magazines and weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus told his disciples that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword. We have too long been complacent with the overwhelming number of deaths by violence. Through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can begin to break this cycle of violence. United Methodist churches in the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference are committed to doing just that. We call on each of you to use your legislative powers to join us in this mission.

We failed to protect our sister, Autura. Let us not fail to protect anyone else.

May the peace of Christ be with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William T. McAlilly".

William T. McAlilly  
Resident Bishop