

**For immediate release - Saturday, August 3, 2019**

**#Enough - We must speak and act against gun violence**

A statement from the Anti-Gun Violence Commission of  
The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

Our Commission writes with a heavy heart about another mass shooting, this time at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas. A shooting that killed at least 20 people and injured possibly up to 40 more as of 8/3/19 @ 8:00 PM. The shooter was 21 year-old Patrick Crusius, a white nationalist.

Crusius was armed with an AK-47-style assault rifle and wearing dark clothing and earmuff-style hearing protection. He opened fire in the Walmart parking lot and then continued inside the store, where 1,000 people were shopping and 100 more were working. Authorities are describing this terrorist attack as "possibly racism-motivated," and are verifying the authenticity of a manifesto Crusius allegedly posted online.

We mourn the deaths of our siblings. We mourn with their family, their friends. We mourn for our country's almost 300 mass shootings in 2019. We mourn the continuation of gun violence that stands against God's dream for our world.

We believe God calls us to speak and act decisively against gun violence. So we offer words of prayer. And we call for action, from ourselves and all of you.

Here are four things you can do today to act in love, against this violence:

1. **[Share our Facebook post](#)**: Raise awareness about hate crimes and stand with those who are wrongly targeted simply because of who they are (such as religious identity).
2. **Read our resource** on understanding and addressing hate crimes. (Posted in the comments.)
3. **Join our AGV Commission**. Currently we are 12 volunteer members seeking to raise awareness about and reduce gun violence in our diocese and nationally. We need more members who are passionate and committed. Posting on Facebook when something tragic happens isn't enough anymore. Join in the work.
4. **Get connected** with [Moms Demand Action](#) and [Everytown for Gun Safety](#) for national resources and updates.

For more information about the AGV Commission, contact The Reverend Canon Sarah Hedgis at [shedgis@philadelphiacathedral.org](mailto:shedgis@philadelphiacathedral.org).

## We must speak.

### **Words of prayer from the Christian tradition:**

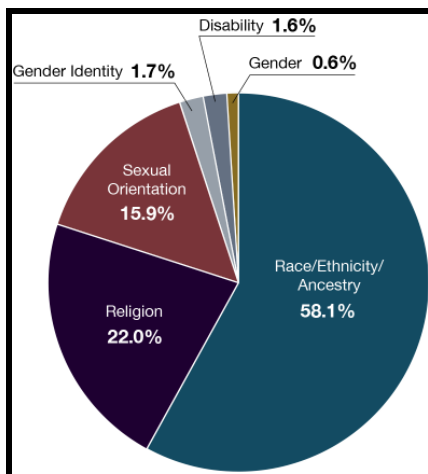
*Gracious God,  
surround us and all who mourn this day  
with your continuing compassion.  
Do not let grief overwhelm your children,  
or be unending,  
or turn them against you.  
May we travel more peacefully because of today,  
and come at last, in the fellowship of all your people,  
to the haven where we long to be;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

(New Zealand Book of Prayer)

## We must act.

### Raise awareness about hate crimes

Authorities have described Patrick Crusius' terrorist attack in El Paso as "possibly racism-motivated." As people who seek to reduce gun violence, we must understand how this violence connects to our country's deep systems of white supremacy and nationalism.



In the US, the FBI defines a hate crime as a "criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity."

The Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism reported a spike in extremist violence and murder in 2018. The Department of Justice has not released hate crime statistics for 2018, but the 2017 hate crime statistics report states there were 7,106 single-bias incidents involving 8,493 victims and 69 multiple-bias incidents involving 335 victims.

Of the over 6,000 known offenders, over 50% of hate crime offenders were white. Of the over 7,000 incidents of a hate crime, 58.1% of hate crimes were based on race/ethnicity/ancestry, with the rest of the breakdown displayed in the included chart.

Hate crimes are real, and they are on the rise in the United States.

With a rise in hate crimes nationally, including a rise in many US major cities, it is important to know how to talk about hate crimes with our communities, neighbors, and loved ones. We must also do what we can to speak and act against hate crimes.

The Southern Poverty Law Center identified 10 things we should all do to address hate crimes and created Ten Ways to Fight Hate: A Community Response Guide, these strategies include --

1. Act
2. Join Forces
3. Support the Victims
4. Speak Up
5. Educate Yourself
6. Create An Alternative
7. Pressure Leaders
8. Stay Engaged
9. Teach Acceptance
10. Dig Deeper

The ADL created a guide to talking about hate crimes with children and young adults, which is crucial as they are exposed to more hate crimes through media coverage and also an increase in communities.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission has basic information about hate crimes, from the state-based definition to how to report hate crimes.

In November 2017, Philadelphia's District Attorney's Office established a hate crime hotline for people who either witness or are a victim of a hate crime in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia Hate Crime Hotline: 215-686-8931

