

Minute Responding to Gun Violence in our Society

Adopted by Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on 11/11/18

The Pittsburgh community has been shaken to its core by the violence inflicted on our Jewish neighbors at the Tree of Life synagogue. Earlier in that same week, two African Americans were murdered in Kentucky in an act of hate after a gunman failed to gain entry to a predominantly Black church. In response to these events and to the pervasiveness of gun violence in our society, we at Pittsburgh Friends Meeting affirm our commitment to our testimonies on Equality, Peace, Caring and Community.

We affirm a security that arises from a spiritual source. Wherever worship happens, whether in a synagogue, church, meetinghouse, or park, the space created around those worshipping is sacred. Suggesting that worshippers secure their sacred spaces with guns places the burden on the victims of violence everywhere and is unequivocally intolerable in a country that claims to protect religious freedom. Instead of weapons, we seek to eliminate sources of fear and division. We publicly denounce rhetoric that seeks to pit one segment of our society against immigrants, people of color, and people of different faiths. Hate speech by our elected officials, combined with easy access to guns, is a deadly combination that our country cannot tolerate.

In the face of this violence and hate, we at Pittsburgh Friends Meeting will remain a welcoming and caring community, while affirming and living into our peace testimony. We will make conscious efforts to build connections with individuals, marginalized groups, and the larger community. We will model the vulnerability of inclusiveness grounded in radical love. We will continue to work to promote peace by supporting initiatives that restrict access to guns and by demanding the return to civil discourse in our country. We unite with our Jewish neighbors in their teaching that, "It is not [our] responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but neither are [we] free to desist from it."