

1 **TITLE: Resolution on Preventing Gun Violence and Recognizing it as a Public**
2 **Health Emergency**

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4 **DATE SUBMITTED:** March 10, 2018

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6 **SUBMITTED JOINTLY BY:** *Hazel Park Congregational United Church of*
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8 Russell, Moderator and Rev. Sara Morse, Pastor, phone 651 707- 4859 email
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13 **SUMMARY OF INTENT:** This resolution declares that the 2018 Annual Meeting of
14 the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ supports adoption of legislation to
15 stem the growing epidemic of gun violence including, but not limited to: establish
16 universal background checks, ban assault rifles with high capacity magazines, refrain
17 from arming teachers in schools, and lift gun-research restrictions on the Centers for
18 Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

19

20 **BACKGROUND AND SUPPORTING STATEMENT:**

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22 WHEREAS during a time of great civil unrest, Jesus gathered his disciples for the
23 Passover meal. As he washed their feet, Jesus foretold his pending death and pronounced a
24 new commandment, “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should
25 love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for
26 one another.” (John 13:34-35) If we are to love one another, we have a responsibility to each
27 other; and

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29 WHEREAS every human being is created in the image of God, so that the senseless
30 loss of even one life from gun violence is an affront to our creator, Genesis 1:27,
31 Romans 8 31-39; and

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33 WHEREAS God hears the cries of those who are oppressed and victimized, and sends
34 God’s faithful servants to respond by speaking truth to those in positions of power,
35 Exodus 3; and

36

37 WHEREAS, as followers of a truth-seeking, truth speaking Christ, we have a
38 responsibility to search for informed, reasoned and rational solutions to the problems
39 that plague our nation and world. People of faith and goodwill cannot willingly avoid
40 the best possible solutions when it comes to protecting ourselves and our neighbors
41 from the horrendous rates of gun violence and how it poses a public health
42 emergency; and

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44 WHEREAS we are called to action on behalf of those suffering, James 2: 14-16, that
45 is, “thoughts and prayers” are not enough; and

46

47 WHEREAS the United Church of Christ has declared its vision of a just world for all,
48 embodied in the three Great Loves--**Love of Neighbor, Love of Children, and Love**
49 **of Creation**, working together to address the inequities in our current world; and
50

51 WHEREAS the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ has as a Core Value
52 seeking a more just and peaceful world, honoring each individual as created in the
53 image of God; and
54

55 WHEREAS gun violence is a public health crisis that kills 89 people per day in the
56 nation and more than 400 Minnesotans every year, devastates the lives of over 500
57 others who are wounded but not killed, and costs the state over \$764 million in
58 measurable expenses; and
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60 WHEREAS many lives could be saved by passing common sense laws that would
61 help prevent gun violence without taking away the Second Amendment rights of
62 responsible gun owners; and
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64 WHEREAS public health studies have repeatedly shown that states with the strongest
65 gun laws have the lowest rates of gun death in all forms, and states with the weakest
66 gun laws have the highest rates of gun death in all forms; and
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68 WHEREAS Minnesotans including hunters and other gun owners, overwhelmingly
69 support keeping guns out of the hands of those who represent a danger to themselves
70 or others; and
71

72 WHEREAS guns can be obtained at a gun show, a gun trafficker, straw purchaser, or
73 through the Internet where private sellers are exempt from having to perform any
74 background check whatsoever before selling a firearm. These sales account for
75 approximately 40% of all gun sales
76 in America; and
77

78 WHEREAS assault rifles are weapons with high capacity magazines which are a class of
79 semi-automatic firearms specifically designed to kill humans quickly and efficiently and have
80 been used in multiple mass shooting incidents including Las Vegas, Aurora, Newtown,
81 Orlando, and Las Vegas and most recently (at this writing) at Marjory Stoneman Douglas
82 High School in Parkland, Florida; and
83

84 WHEREAS beginning with Columbine 19 years ago, more than 150,000 students
85 attending at least 170 primary or secondary schools have experienced a shooting on
86 campus; and
87

88 WHEREAS the argument “The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good
89 guy with a gun” is flawed because it ignores the fundamental problem that, according
90 to a 2015 report from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives there
91 are more than 350 million guns in circulation in the United States — approximately

92 113 guns for every 100 people; and

93

94 WHEREAS students, law enforcement groups and teacher organizations oppose

95 arming teachers with guns as a viable option for preventing violence; and

96

97 WHEREAS the National Association of Secondary School Principals said in a

98 December 2012 statement: “Firearms in principals’ and teachers’ hands might do

99 more harm than good. To be effective, schools must be perceived as safe havens;” and

100

101 WHEREAS, since 1996, at the urging of the National Rifle Association, the United

102 States Congress has prevented federal money from being spent on researching gun

103 violence and has actively restricted the nation’s principal public health agency, the

104 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from looking into why the United States

105 has five times the rate of gun deaths per year than most European countries; and

106

107 WHEREAS, in June 2016 the American Medical Association adopted a position that

108 the United States is facing a “public health crisis in gun violence” that requires a

109 comprehensive public health response and solution and will actively lobby Congress

110 to overturn the restrictions on the CDC;

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112 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2018 Annual Meeting of the

113 Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ urges our congressional

114 representatives and state legislators to support gun violence prevention measures and

115 oppose any bills that would weaken gun laws; and

116

117 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota

118 Conference United Church of Christ states its support of saving lives by the

119 enactment of common sense gun violence prevention legislation in the state and

120 nation including, for example:

121 - Requiring universal background checks to cover all firearm sales and transfers

122 - Authorizing gun violence protection orders

123 - Funding gun violence prevention programs

124 - Removing prohibitions in current law against the collection of gun-related data

125 for the purpose of public health research

126 - Supporting reinstating federal funding for scientific research of gun violence by

127 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

128 - Banning the sale of assault weapons, large capacity magazines, and devices that alter

129 the operation of guns to make them more lethal; and

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131 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota

132 Conference United Church of Christ states its strong opposition to

133 - Attempts to weaken current Minnesota gun laws

134 - Attempts to arm educators with guns as a solution to reduce gun violence

135 - Enactment of dangerous gun laws such as “Stand Your Ground,” “Permitless

136 Carry,” “Lifetime Permit to Carry,” “Campus Carry,” and the repeal of gun-free

137 school zones;

138 - Attempts to silence or stifle the scientific and medical community from
139 providing sound methods to save and improve the lives of each other and our
140 neighbors; and

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142 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference Minister, pastors and
143 congregational leaders express the intent of this resolution to all Members of
144 Congress, state legislators, and the governor, and to candidates for those offices, and
145 that they become familiar with the positions of candidates for public office on gun
146 violence prevention measures and encourage voting in accordance with that
147 knowledge; and

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149 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota
150 Conference United Church of Christ directs the Creation Justice Team to

151 - Stay informed on public health data related to gun violence in the state and
152 nation

153 - Stay informed on legislation related to public policy on gun violence

154 - Work with independent gun violence prevention organizations whose missions
155 include promoting a culture of health and safety for Minnesotans by preventing
156 gun violence

157 - Keep Minnesota Conference member congregations and individuals informed of
158 opportunities to promote effective laws and policies, and for education regarding
159 gun violence prevention.

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161 **Additional Resources:**

162 Resources sited for this resolution:

163 <http://lawcenter.giffords.org/>

164 <http://www.bradycampaign.org/>

165 <https://injury.research.chop.edu/violence-prevention-initiative/types-violence-involving-youth/gun-violence/gun-violence-facts-and#.Wp8JmfnwbDc>

166 <https://protectmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Gun-Facts-with-Citations-Protect-Minnesota.pdf>

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168 **FUNDING:** Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in
169 accordance with the overall mandates of the affected entities and the funds available.

170 The Creation Justice Team does not anticipate any costs to other entities of the
171 Minnesota Conference, nor any costs to the Team beyond its normal budget.

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173 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Conference Minister, in consultation with appropriate
174 ministries or other entities within the Minnesota Conference UCC will determine the
175 implementing body or bodies.