



Pastoral Letter Calling for the Cessation of Sales of Assault Rifles

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Drafted by Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr.

As women and men who give leadership to and on behalf of the 17 Christian denominations that form the Ohio Council of Churches, and as motivated by the love of God for all of humanity as expressed through the life and witness of Jesus Christ, we write to announce our call for the immediate cessation of sales of semi-automatic assault weapons in Ohio.

Like all Ohioans of faith and goodwill, we have been horrified by past and continued mass murders and injuries inflicted on school after school, community after community, by misguided individuals who managed to gain access to semi-automatic assault weapons. Sadly, we all must accept the outrageous truth that no places and no institutions, regardless of societal importance or sacred quality, are safe from the possibility that someone in possession of a gun specifically and intentionally designed for rapid human carnage and mass death, as influenced by hate, anger, or mental illness, will use it to destroy lives, disrupt aspirations, and disfigure neighborhoods methodically and maliciously. It is clear to us, as it is to scores of Ohioans, no persons, no institutions, and no communities should ever have to make plans for such a possibility.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and are therefore endowed with irrevocable dignity and worth. In addition, we who give leadership and caring service in the name of Jesus Christ humbly embrace his identity and proclaim his purpose as one who gives abundant life to all. When viewed through the lens of Christian faith, mass gun violence and death as caused by people with assault rifles is an assault on God's vision for humanity.

It is quite difficult for people in Ohio and across the nation to flourish and otherwise live abundantly when they are forced to live in fear over the possibility that someone wielding a semi-automatic assault rifle and impaired by hate, anger, or mental illness may enter a school, a supermarket, or a religious institution, and rapidly kill and maim precious children and adults indiscriminately. These weapons of human destruction are equipped with magazines that can each hold 30 bullets, and thus allow firing rapidly without aiming. By easily changing the magazine, 120 bullets can be fired in one minute.

As Christian leaders, we are united in prayer for families and communities who have experienced vicious assault rifle-inflicted mass murder. It is clear to us that their catastrophic losses are not consistent with God's vision for humanity. Our prayers come with our conviction that semi-automatic assault rifles have no legitimate place in non-military contexts in Ohio. They are not designed for the sport of hunting but for the brutal murder of scores of people in the fastest possible manner. Therefore, in the interests of honoring God-given human dignity and worth, preserving sacred lives, enabling human flourishing, and upholding the common good, the Ohio Council of Churches and its member denominations call for the immediate banning of the sales of all semi-automatic assault rifles in Ohio.

Sincerely,

Reverend Dr. Jack Sullivan Jr.