Opinion
Editorial



Crosses are seen near a vigil Nov. 6 in memory of the victims killed in the shooting at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland, Texas. (CNS/Reuters/Jonathan Bachman)

by NCR Editorial Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 14, 2017
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

This is the seventh editorial in NCR about gun violence since the shooting deaths of 20 children and six adults in Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown,

Connecticut. The horror of that mass slaughter on Dec. 14, 2012, shook us — and much of the nation — to the very marrow of our bones. We pledged to use the resources of this publication to work toward finding a solution to gun violence in this country.

Having in recent days witnessed equally horrific scenes in Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs, Texas, with deep regret we admit that little has changed. In fact, since Sandy Hook, the U.S. has seen some 218 people slain in 32 mass shootings, according to a database maintained by Mother Jones magazine. More than 33,000 people die from gun violence in this country each year, according to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence.

The most recent incident with the shooter Devin Patrick Kelley at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs demonstrates how complicated an issue gun violence is. Finding solutions will require a comprehensive list of measures involving not just laws governing who can purchase guns and what kinds of guns and accessories are legal. We must also reexamine how we fund mental health services and make those services available. We need more comprehensive systems of data collection, which means not only better background checks, but also research into gun violence as a public health issue.

In a society that glamorizes and glorifies violence and aggression, the Catholic Church with its long tradition of active nonviolence can play an important role in changing attitudes and beliefs.

Many of our editorials over the last nearly five years have challenged the oversized position the gun lobby plays in our legislatures and national conversation about guns. The gun lobby will not be going away. Those of us who oppose its agenda, and we believe that is the majority of Americans of all political persuasions, can learn from groups like the National Rifle Association, the National Association for Gun Rights, and Gun Owners of America. These groups are highly organized, and they know how to motivate their members. Their members contribute money to the cause, they are vocal and they vote.

> Our advice if you want to help stop gun violence: Get organized. Get vocal. Get out the vote.
>
> Tweet this

Those opposed to gun violence must emulate the gun lobby. Numerous organizations are working against gun violence — many of them interfaith and bipartisan. We urge you to find a group that suits your particular interests and join it. Here are some recommendations:

- Faiths United to Prevent Gun violence is a coalition of 50 groups representing many faith communities across the nation. Several Catholic groups are included.
- The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence is a Washington-based group formed in 1974. It has a heavy emphasis on policy development and state and national legislation. It also actively rebuts the gun lobby's "dangerous, twisted interpretation of the Second Amendment."
- Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Founded by Jim Brady, the press secretary to President Ronald Reagan who was gravely wounded when Reagan was shot in 1984, the Brady Campaign has a plan to halve the number of gun deaths in the U.S. by 2025.

Advertisement

- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America was founded by Shannon Watts in the wake of the Sandy Hook shootings. Modeled after Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Moms Demand Action is building a grassroots network of activists who can advocate for state and federal laws, consumer protection regulations and industry standards to curb gun violence.
- Giffords, formerly Americans for Responsible Solutions, was founded by Gabby Giffords, the former Arizona Congresswoman wounded in a mass shooting in 2011, and her retired astronaut husband Mark Kelly. Giffords builds coalitions among interest groups, and it has a law center for legislative research and a political action committee.

Our advice if you want to help stop gun violence: Get organized. Get vocal. Get out the vote.

This story appears in the **Gun Violence** feature series. View the full series.
A version of this story appeared in the **Nov 17-30, 2017** print issue.