

Really,
Today!

It seems that almost every American wants to speak ~~today~~ about the gun issue: from the President to the NRA, from Christian evangelists to anarchists in Oregon who are occupying a federal building. Some love guns, and want more, some hate them and want them to vanish. Given that there are around 300 million guns in America today, the latter ~~option~~ ^{is} seems unlikely. One thing ~~seems~~ ^{is} certain: it's more than academic debate. Gun violence in America takes more than 10,000 Americans to their death each year. Contrast that with Japan which has less than 50 gun related deaths per year...and Canada which has less then 200 per year, and you can see we've got a problem.

Recently a group of Christian pastors and leaders have authored a document titled, Advent Declaration on Gun Violence. ^{I quote w/} ~~I quote~~ its Preamble:

Pastors and leaders in the Church from throughout the US met on December 10, 2015 to express grief that we need to lead our congregations over and over in worship services of lament for senseless deaths from guns. We recognize that this is a particular cultural issue woven into our American society. A spirit of fear, enmity, racial prejudice, distrust, and violence is tragically normal in our way of life. We believe this is contrary to the gospel, and so we say, "Enough of this. No more." ~~There is something seriously wrong with our way of life if we tolerate violence in our society.~~ We believe God is calling us to stop this accelerating, downward spiral of destruction. There is an urgent need for followers of the Prince of Peace to challenge the easy use of guns in our society.[?]

Declaration continues

Therefore, this Advent, we commit ourselves to the following implications of the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as we understand it:

1. We advocate for greater restraint, and stricter controls on the private use of guns...citing Jesus: "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt 26:52). Therefore,

*We renounce the advocacy by Christians for civilians' use of deadly force against people...
We call for restraint by our police in their use of lethal weapons....*

2. Citing the central importance of Christ's death on the Cross, they conclude:
We renounce the use of guns for self-defense, not because to do so is practical or because God guarantees our safety, but because we believe it's right and it's the call of Jesus.

We accept that the way of non-violent resistance to evil involves danger and risk, but also accept that the way of the cross is the path to the joy and peace of the Kingdom... skipping down to #5

5. We pursue love for our enemies. "I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Lk 6:27). ~~Therefore,~~

~~We recognize the full weight of this command—Jesus spoke it to people whose nation was occupied by an oppressive, tyrannical foreign power who mocked their faith.~~

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I find it refreshing that a group of pastors and Christians who might be characterized as evangelicals, are willing to stick out their necks and say that the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament are impossible to reconcile with the pro gun stance of so many on the religious right. Honestly, I'm not sure what it means to love my enemies, I am sure Jesus did *not* mean, stockpile your weapons, shoot first and ask questions later.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment