

## A Sermon Sample for Stand-Up Sunday

(Feel free, of course, to use information conveyed here in a way that suits you.)

Here's a question for a church full of caring people on a quiet Sunday morning: **When does a society and a human being say, "Enough?"**

**Is it when 91 Americans a day are being killed by guns . . . a death toll equivalent to 9/11 every single month?** Is it when 130,000 people — roughly the population of Columbia, South Carolina — are shot every year in our country, many left with crippling impairments and devastating health-care bills? When 33,000 Americans — nearly the population of peninsular Charleston — are killed by guns each year?

No. Somehow, that hasn't been *enough*.

**Is it when we're suffering more mass shootings — incidents when four or more people are shot — than there are days in the year**, as occurred in our country in 2015? Is it when the number of Americans killed by guns, for the first time, equals the number killed in car accidents?

**Is it when gunmen kill scores of people in our high schools and colleges, and 20 six- and seven-year-old children are murdered at an elementary school?** Is it when a man walks into a theater full of people eating popcorn and watching a Batman movie and pumps bullets into 82 of them, or when children and teenagers are routinely cut down by stray bullets in broad daylight on our streets and playgrounds?

No. Still not *enough*.

**Is it when a man walks into a church — a sacred space like this one — and guns down nine people** while they're studying the Bible and talking to God, right here in our state?

Is it when our teachers and children are hiding in their classrooms in lockdown drills to prepare for a gunman on the loose in their schools . . . and when churches across our state are hiring armed security to guard their congregations so they can worship God?

No, somehow, not yet. We still haven't stood as a community and said, "Enough."

**Or could it be that that day comes on a Sunday morning like this one** when there are no gunshots or sirens to be heard, when we're sitting side by side and looking into our hearts together? Today, on Stand-Up Sunday, when congregations just like ours are doing this all across our state?

Yes, let's make it today — right now! — that we reclaim our compassion, and profess out loud that we care enough about each other to stop shaking our heads and throwing up our hands at each new atrocity . . . and finally act. That we believe enough in "Thou Shalt Not Kill" to stop making killing easy for those whom we know should never have guns in the first place.

That's right: *We know that!* Ninety percent of South Carolinians want background checks for all gun purchases, according to a statewide poll published in September (Public Policy Polling, 2015), and 85% of gun owners nationally do, as well — a larger and more nonpartisan consensus than

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you could find on any issue, but one that hasn't been heard because we haven't stood up and voiced it.

Yes, we can debate other aspects of gun legislation and respect our differences of opinion, but here's one that all of us can agree on: If we were in that church, in that school, in that movie theater or on that street corner when the gunman appeared, there's one thing we'd all wish — that a background check had been done to see if he had a criminal record or a dangerous mental-health history before he was handed a weapon that might fire a hundred bullets a minute. *The Golden Rule, the bedrock of every religious tradition: Do unto others as you would have done unto you.* How can we not apply it when human lives are at stake?

Background checks on all gun purchases. A basic requirement somehow not mandatory for any gun that's bought online or at a gun show under our current laws, and that's being blatantly ignored by black-market dealers because we've failed to insist on it or prosecute it.

**Background checks on all gun purchases. Something that must be done when 90% of crime guns are being sold by 5% of gun dealers.**

(<http://www.bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/Taking-On-Bad-Apple-Gun-Dealers.pdf>) Imagine that! If 5% of meat distributors were selling 90% of the tainted meat, would we shrug our shoulders and say there's nothing that can be done?

**Background checks. Something we need to support now, more than ever, because:**

- *Our legislators need to hear that this is NOT a partisan issue. In fact, 90% of South Carolinians want background checks on all gun purchases, so dangerous people can be prohibited.*
- *Funding isn't guaranteed. The president's recent actions hinge largely on funding that will likely get tied up in Congress, leaving the fate of thorough background checks in the hands of each state.*
- *Our voices are crucial! Enforcement will likely be neglected or impeded in a state if its legislators and enforcement agencies conclude that its citizens don't care about background checks and the epidemic of gun violence.*
- *We must be better neighbors. Besides ranking No. 11 in gun deaths per capita, SC is the sixth-leading supplier of crime guns to other states, so we can't drag our feet in this effort.*

Background checks. Because states with thorough ones see:

- 46% fewer women killed with guns by intimate partners
- 48% fewer law enforcement officers killed
- 48% fewer suicides (<http://www.bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/Brady-Oregon-report.pdf>)

Of course, we know that this step alone won't solve the problem of gun violence. But it will begin to reduce this epidemic. It will save lives. It will make our state and country a safer place for our children and grandchildren.

So let's sign the letters that will be available outside our church as you leave today, asking our legislators for background checks. Let's put aside five minutes a week to keep emailing and calling our elected officials until this change occurs — or best of all, pay them a personal visit.

Let's consider a second and separate offering, a pledge to "stand up" for the Emanuel AME Nine by committing to travel to the State House this spring when the critical moment comes for this legislation. Those so moved should provide us with your names and email addresses so you can be notified when that time comes — a display of our faith communities' compassion that could have a profound effect.

And, finally, let's all rise now and stand together for one silent minute in memory of all those who've been killed by guns. One silent minute that screams "*Enough!*"