# Media Release

**The Episcopal Church**
*Office of Public Affairs*

Episcopal House of Bishops offers A Word to the Church

**Episcopal House of Bishops issues A Word to the Church
Godly Leadership in the Face of Violence**

[March 12, 2013] The Episcopal Church House of Bishops, meeting in retreat in Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC, offers the following Word to the Church.

**A Word to the Church:
Godly Leadership in the Face of Violence**

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  Amen  (Collect for Tuesday in Holy Week.  Book of Common Prayer (BCP) p. 220)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Your House of Bishops has gathered in retreat from March 8-12 at Kanuga Conference Center in Hendersonville, NC.  The theme for our days together has been “Godly Leadership in the Midst of Loss.”  We have heard moving reflections on loss in the wake of: the shootings in Newtown, Hurricane Sandy, the ongoing struggles in Haiti, historical trauma experienced by Native Americans in South Dakota, and physical illness.  Being together in conversation, prayer and common worship, we have shared the reality of new life in the resurrected Jesus who has overcome death and redeems our losses.

Our time together has brought us to a new place of recognition with respect to how violence infects, and affects, our lives.  We have considered how the reality of violence in our world, our society, our churches, our homes, and ourselves alienate us from God and each other.  And we repent that we have too often neglected to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.  In this Lenten season we pray:  “Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.”  (From the Litany of Penance for Ash Wednesday, BCP p. 268)

We particularly grieve those killed by senseless gun violence in the many contexts from which we come.  We lament and have cried over the widely reported mass shootings in this country, recalling tragedies like Aurora, Oak Creek and Newtown.  We are outraged by the too often unseen and unacknowledged daily massacre of our young people in cities such as Chicago, Newark, Baltimore, Port-au-Prince, and Tegucigalpa.  This carnage must stop.

As bishops of The Episcopal Church we embody a wide variety of experiences and perspectives with respect to firearms.  Many among us are hunters and sport-shooters, former members of the military and law-enforcement officers.  We respect and honor that we are not of one mind regarding matters related to gun legislation.  Yet we are convinced that there needs to be a new conversation in the United States that challenges gun violence.  Because of the wide variety of contexts in which we live and our commitment to reasoned and respectful discourse that holds together significant differences in creative tension, we believe that The Episcopal Church can and must lead in this effort.  In fact many in this Church are already doing so, for which we thank God.

At our ordinations as bishops we pledged to “boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience” of those we are called to serve. (BCP p. 518)  We call all Episcopalians to pray and work for the end of gun violence.  We commit ourselves to lead a new conversation in our nations as to the appropriate use and legislation of firearms.  And we further commit ourselves to specific actions to this end.

Praying and working together we can be instruments of God’s restoring and reconciling love for the whole world.  Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

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