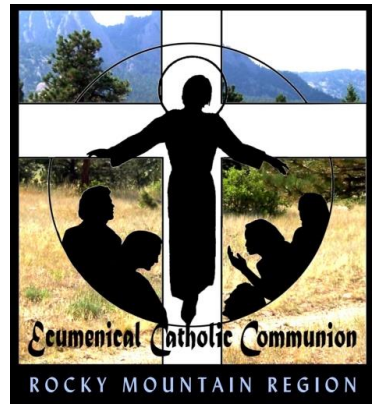


## Regional Statement Challenging our Culture of Violence

### THE GUN VIOLENCE SITUATION

As people of faith in this holy season, we light candles, longing to illuminate our path to peace. We follow the Star that leads all people to be valued as Beloved of God. In any given week there is a shooting, or perhaps several across these often violent United States. In the hours following Christmas Day, innocent lives were taken and wounded by gunshot in Lakewood, while more recently Boulder County firefighters were threatened by a man brandishing an AR-15.



We all know, courtesy of the up-to-the-minute media blasts, the stories of guns, bullets, anger, blood. Some of our families have directly experienced the trauma, the police, the shelter-in-place orders, the crying mothers and fathers and children. If we are fortunate, the shooter is arrested. Sometimes not. Families broken, children orphaned, tears, lives changed.

The Rocky Mountain Region of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) is a diverse communion of communities which values inclusivity and honors every voice in the holy conversations that direct us on the path of truth, justice, freedom and peace. We share consensus around the challenges that must be made to address gun violence, personally and collectively. Rather than throw up our hands in despair, there are actions that each of us may take to be part of the solution.

We challenge ourselves personally. Are we willing to change our viewing habits, our language, the images we use and the video games we play, glorifying violence? As decision points arise, we challenge each other and our fellow citizens to be more willing to prayerfully consider a sacrifice of particular individual rights and privileges for the sake of the common good, deeply embedded in Catholic social teaching.

We are grateful for responsible owners of firearms. Are we each willing to reach out to those in our circle of influence and ask them directly to safeguard their firearms? We particularly hold accountable parents, understanding that they hold ultimate responsibility for the safety and actions of their children.

We support our youth, acknowledging the stressors and disruptions the current pandemic has placed on their education, their relationships and their own sense of well-being. Are we willing to personally contact the kids we know, offering them our support and encourage to come forward if there is disturbing behavior among their friends and classmates?

Collectively, we challenge our respective legislators, City Councils and school board members to fund more mental health resources especially for our youth, veterans and mentally ill. "A few months ago, two members of our region were shot by a neighbor, a veteran who suffered mental illness," lamented Bishop Kae Madden. "Thankfully, the members lived and are now facing the long road of healing: body, mind, heart and soul. The ripple effect of this trauma is ongoing and pervasive. The availability of guns intersects the mental health of gun owners. How might we address both in order to protect the sacred life of all?"

Our faith communities can partner with Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence and support the advocacy work of Colorado Ceasefire. May we pray peace and hope in our congregation, in our family, In our world. May we BE peace, hope and love for all around us.

We can make a difference. What have you, yourself, done with your family, your congregation, your community? How have you taken up the challenge to put violence aside as we try to live peaceably? May we celebrate the continual coming of the Prince of Peace by our thoughts and actions.

In peace, hope, love and challenge,

The Communities of the Rocky Mountain Region of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion

9 January 2022