



dojustice

activism and advocacy at the crossroads of faith and life

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. —Micah 6:8

As we prepare to honor the victims and the survivors of gun violence during Wear Orange Week 2024, this edition of the Do Justice News profiles the work of St. John’s Gun Violence Prevention Ministry over the last year to prevent and reduce gun violence through prayer, education and action. We meet on the third Sunday of the month at 12:30 pm and all are welcome. Contact Margaret Hilton, parishioner for more information.

June 2023



In early June, we joined with community groups across the country for Wear Orange week, to honor survivors and raise awareness of gun violence. We teamed with Nourishing Bethesda volunteers to pack information cards on safe firearm storage in bags of nonperishable food, for distribution to families in need.

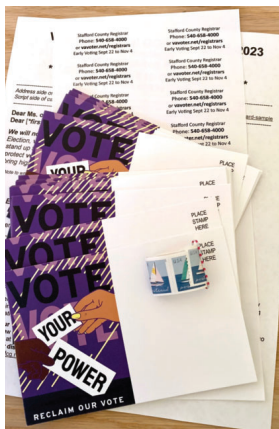
June 4th, Wear Orange Sunday GVP volunteers handed out brochures and orange ribbons, many parishioners wore orange and the Clergy wore orange stoles. Worship services were infused with GVP themes, and Rector Sari Ateek’s sermon — What does our faith have to do with our action? — focused on the scriptural basis for acting against gun violence. Following the worship service, orange-clad parishioners convened for the monthly meeting of the Faith in Action Coordinating Committee.



The *Do Justice Newsletter* is published by the Social Justice Advocacy Committee (SJAC) of St. John’s Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish. If you’d like to join the SJAC, please contact one of the co-chairs: Lisa Raisner (lraisner@gmail.com) or Annelise Hafer (annelisehafer@yahoo.com). All are welcome!

Editorial Board: Rev. Anne Derse, Rob Hartmann and Lisa Raisner

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Summer 2023

We organized a nonpartisan get-out-the vote postcard campaign to Virginia ahead of the November election for state legislature. With gains in gun safety legislation hanging in the balance, we purchased supplies and prepared 50 packets of 20 postcards, stamps and pre-printed labels with voting information, which were quickly snapped up by 22 eager parishioners on Renewal Sunday.

October 2023

The GVP Ministry joined Washington National Cathedral, Temple Sinai and other houses of worship to sponsor National United Methodist Church's Silence the Violence concert. The concert benefitted the TraRon Center, a DC nonprofit founded by gun violence survivor Ryane Nickens that helps children and parents recover from the trauma of losing loved ones to gun violence.



Our October monthly GVP meeting drew a dozen parishioners to a briefing on ghost guns by Montgomery County Police Sergeant Chad Bleggi. Using slides, he explained what ghost guns are, presented data on the numbers of ghost guns recovered by County police and outlined the Maryland law that now prohibits shipping ghost guns into our state. His detailed description of the January 2022 shooting at Magruder High School (the shooter used a ghost gun), led to an extended discussion about parents' role in guiding teens toward positive activities and away from crime.



November 2023

We sponsored and helped organize Temple Shalom's November 7 Interfaith program, "Gun Industry Accountability: Seeking Justice for All in Maryland." Karen Herren, Director of Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence, moderated the program during which Maryland State Senator Jeff Waldstreicher previewed his accountability bill. Additional speakers were Sandy and Lonnie Phillips who described the tragedy of losing their daughter in the Aurora, Colorado, theater shooting. Sandy and Lonnie sought accountability but nearly went bankrupt after losing their lawsuit.

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From top:

Packets for writing postcards to Virginia

Singers at the "Silence the Violence" Concert

Briefing on ghost guns

State Senator Jeff Waldstreicher speaks at Temple Shalom



Present
**Gun Industry Accountability:
Seeking Justice for All in Maryland**

**Sunday, November 5
7 to 8 pm**

Temple Shalom 8401 Grubb Rd, Chevy Chase, MD 20815
Attend in Person or Watch Live Stream

Learn about the federal law that shields gun manufacturers, dealers, and other members of the gun industry from nearly all legal liability for wrongful conduct that leads to injury or death—and learn how states like Maryland are fighting back to hold the gun industry accountable and give gun violence survivors access to justice.





At our November monthly GVP meeting, we wrote postcards to Governor Wes Moore, Attorney General Anthony Brown, and our State Senators, asking them to support gun industry accountability legislation in the 2024 General Assembly session.

January 2024

On January 12, more than 40 parishioners attended a forum on Firearm Safety and Gun Industry Accountability, featuring Maryland State Senator Jeff Waldstreicher.

From top:

Asking for gun industry accountability with postcards

Senator Waldstreicher speaks at St. John's Lunch break on Advocacy Day

Advocacy Day Lunch Break (L); Statehouse Rally on Advocacy Day (R)



Later in January, thirteen parishioners traveled to Annapolis for Moms Demand Action Advocacy Day, where they asked their State representatives to pass Gun Industry Accountability legislation and other GVP bills.

Thanks in part to the 1,000 GOTV postcards we sent in fall 2023, gun sense candidates won majorities in Virginia's November state elections. In 2024, these state legislators passed dozens of GVP bills, including a ban on assault weapons. Although Governor Glenn Youngkin vetoed most of the bills, he signed two that will: 1) Allow felony charges against a parent or guardian who enables access to a gun by a child who has been deemed a threat; 2) Ban on "auto-sears," inexpensive devices that easily turn a semi-automatic firearm into a fully-automatic machine gun.



April 2024

Thanks in part to our advocacy, the Maryland legislature passed the gun industry accountability bill! In a social media post, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher thanked constituents and GVP advocates for helping to pass the bill and shared a photo including Deacon and Minister of Community Engagement Anne Derse, along with 6 other parishioners and friends. The legislature also approved 2 other GVP bills we advocated for; these bills will: 1) Create a state center for gun violence prevention and intervention; and 2) Require advance notice of active shooter drills and a state health department study of the impacts and effectiveness of such drills.



Meeting with Senator Waldstreicher on Advocacy Day