**Platte Woods UMC Courageous Conversations Discussion Guide**
The goal of every Courageous Conversation is to challenge ourselves to consider what we think, believe or know about a specific topic or subject that affects each of us, our families, our communities, our country and our world. In conversation with other people, we learn with and from others about the specific topic or subject; and then consider how we feel called to respond to any new information and knowledge that is shared and learned.

**A few ground rules for Courageous Conversations…**

**1) Use “I,” “me” and “my” statements.**When one speaks, they do so for themselves specifically. It is best to never assume what others think, believe or know. Thus, using “they,” “them,” and “our” or “we” statements ensure we do not intentionally or unintentionally force our own thoughts or beliefs onto other people.

**2) Discuss to learn, do NOT debate to win.**
Courageous Conversations is an opportunity to learn and grow in community with others who may think differently than you.

Consider the following questions about yourself…
- WHY do I think or believe the way I do?
- HOW did I come to think or believe this way?
- WHO (specifically) influenced my thoughts and beliefs about this subject?
- WHEN did I started to think or believe in a certain way?
- HOW do these thoughts or beliefs shape the way I live daily?

Considering these questions and their answers will help provide you with insight into your own thoughts, beliefs and knowledge as you listen and hear from others.

**3) Be curious!**
Each of us is unique; none of us are the same! Each of us may have different experiences and reasoning when it comes to the topic of discussion. Jesus asked far more questions than he ever answered; be like Jesus and ask questions to gain insight and understanding.

Remember: the goal of any Courageous Conversation is to learn and grow, deepening one’s understanding and knowledge about how we each individually and communally live and behave in our world.

**Thank you for participating in this Courageous Conversation!**
May you feel the Spirit of God guide you in your words, your group discussions,
and your actions and behaviors as you live into the future with new understanding!

**Courageous Conversations on Gun Violence**
Please find below discussion questions on the topic of Gun Violence.
Any questions, please contact Pastor Choongho Kwon or Pastor Jess Horsley.

**Session 1: My Experience & Understanding of Firearms/Guns**
 **Group Introduction & Go-Around: Five “I am” statements *(10-15 min)***
Go around the group; share your name and take 1 minute to share five **“I am”** statements about yourself. This will help you define for those in your group who you are based on your **“I am”** statements. Examples: “I am a mother of 2 elementary age kids” “I am an Army veteran” “I am a vegetarian” “I am a pacifist” “I am a hunter”
The goal is to help others get to know you better!

**Hopes & Concerns *(10 min total)***

* What are your hopes for your family, community and country?
* What are your concerns for your family, community and country?
* What sense of purpose or mission guides you in your life?

**Firearm Familiarity: What we each know *(30-40 min)***

* How familiar are you with firearms/guns?
* What role have firearms/guns played in your life?
* What is your own personal experience with firearms/guns?
* What have you learned about firearms/guns?
* Where did you learn about firearms/guns?
* What do you believe is the purpose of a firearm/gun?
* Do you or your family own firearms/guns? Why or why not?
* What is your family background or circumstance that impacts your view on gun ownership & responsibility?
* Do you or your family watch movies or play video games in which firearms/guns are a part of the story or plot?
* How does this affects your understanding, thoughts or beliefs about guns?
* Why and where do you think people carry guns? Why and where do you carry a gun?

**Scripture (10 min)**

* Read Luke 22:35-38, 47-51 and Matthew 26:52-25
* What do you think Jesus would say about firearm/gun ownership? Why?

**Closing Questions to Ask *(10 min)***

* Would anyone like others to clarify any statements or comments made?
* What is one take I have from today’s discussion/conversation?

**Session 2: Firearm/Gun Violence and My Response**

**Group Introduction & Go-Around: Five “I am…” statements *(10-15 min)***
Go around the group; share your name and have each person takes 1 minute to share
five **“I am…”** statements about themselves. Have each person start each statement with **“I am…”** and then conclude each statement with something they want to share about themselves to help others in the group get to know them.

**My Response to Firearm/Gun Violence**

* What is your emotional reaction when you hear about an act of gun violence?
* What is your emotional reaction when you hear about a mass shooting?
* Does the gun violence news impact your life? How? In what ways?
* Have you, your family or someone you know ever experienced gun violence?
(For those who say “yes,” be aware of the sensitive nature of this topic; ask if they would like to share - noting this is very personal)
\*\* If you have experienced gun violence or know someone who has, how has it affected your life? How have you lived with or overcome the aftermath?

**Gun Rights and Responsibility**

* Is firearm ownership and the second amendment very important to you? Why or why not?
* Is there anything you would change about current gun laws or regulation in your state or at the federal level?

Check your local firearms laws here:
[**https://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/state-gun-laws/missouri/**](https://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/state-gun-laws/missouri/)

* What is *responsible* gun ownership? What does this include, entail or look like?
* What could you as a Christian or Jesus-follower do to stop or prevent gun violence in your local neighborhoods, schools, communities and cities?

Read the following quotes and share your personal thoughts with your group:

**Opinion 1:** *“As far as the Bible is concerned, the use of guns is a matter of personal conviction. There is nothing unspiritual about owning a gun or knowing how to use one. There is nothing wrong with protecting oneself or loved ones, even if it involves the use of weapons. We need not pretend there is never a need for guns, but pointing a gun at a person and using it should always be a last resort. We should seek to neutralize threats without violence whenever possible.”*

**Opinion 2:** *“As Christians, we ought to be among the first and loudest voices proclaiming to be American does not mean one must own a gun. Guns do not make America safer; what makes America safer is faith, hope and embracing our neighbor.”*

**Closing Questions to Ask *(10 min)***

* Would anyone like others to clarify any statements or comments made?
* What is one take I have from today’s discussion/conversation?

**Additional Resources to Consider**

When looking at any resource, consider the following questions:

* What is the purpose of the resource & information being shared; is it…
\* to inform (general information)
\* persuade (convince or share an opinion with a specific position or goal in mind)
\* goodwill (celebrate, appreciate or congratulate)
* What message is being sent by the resource? Why?
* Who benefits from the message being successfully received? How so?
* Whose voice is not being shared/included? What info is missing or left unsaid?

 **Gun Advocacy Groups**

National Rifle Association (NRA) - <https://home.nra.org/>

National African American Gun Owners Association - <https://naaga.co/>

Firearms Policy Coalition - <https://www.firearmspolicy.org/>

 **Gun Safety Advocacy Groups**

Everytown for Gun Safety - <https://www.everytown.org/>

AFFIRM at the Aspen Institute (Medical Resource) <https://affirmresearch.org/>

The Alliance for Gun Responsibility - <https://gunresponsibility.org/>

Evolve (note: features stories of accidental firearm violence) <http://www.evolveusa.com/>

**Videos to Consider Watching**

MedCram (Dr. Roger Seheult, MD) Firearm Violence & Suicide Explained Clearly YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO5W9vk55w4>

TEDTalk: A Solution to Gun Violence Found in US History David Farrell YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgHELssUSZU>

www.preventioninstitute.org Prevention Institute’s Summary of Recommendations to Prevent Gun Violence Time and again, we are heartbroken by the news of another mass shooting. Part of our healing must be the conviction that we will do everything in our power to keep these tragedies from happening again. It's not only the high-profile mass shootings that we must work to prevent, but also the daily death-byguns that claims more than 30,000 lives every year. Gun safety: Reduce the imminent risk of lethality through sensible gun laws and a culture of safety. 1. Sensible gun laws: Reduce easy access to dangerous weapons. 2. Establish a culture of gun safety. a. Reduce firearm access to youth and individuals who are at risk of harming themselves or others. b. Hold the gun industry accountable and ensure there is adequate oversight overthe marketing and sales of guns and ammunition. c. Engage responsible gun dealers and owners in solutions. d. Insist on mandatory training and licensing for owners. e. Require safe and secure gun storage. Underlying contributors to gun violence: systematically reduce risks and increase resilience in individuals, families, and communities. 3. Public health solutions: Recognize gun violence as a critical and preventable public health problem. 4. Comprehensive solutions: Support community planning and implementation of comprehensive community safety plans that include prevention and intervention. 5. Trauma, connection, and services: Expand access to high quality, culturally competent, coordinated, social, emotional, and mental health supports and address the impact oftrauma. Prevention Infrastructure: ensure effectiveness and sustainability of efforts 6. Support firearm injury and mortality prevention research: Ensure that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have robust and sustained resources for gun violence prevention research. 7. Health system: Establish a comprehensive health system in which violence prevention is a health system responsibility and imperative. New Frontiers: continue to learn, innovate, and increase impact through research and practice 8. Community healing: Prevent community trauma. 9. Mental health and wellbeing: Invest in communities to promote resilience and mental health and wellbeing. 10. Support healthy norms about masculinity: Explore the pathways between gun violence and harmful norms that have been about maintaining power and privilege. 11. Impulsive anger: Explore the linkages between anger and gun violence. 12. Economic development: Reduce concentrated disadvantage and invest in employment opportunities. 13. Law enforcement violence: Establish accountability for sworn officers and private security. 14. Technology: Advance gun safety and self-defense technology. Supported by a grant from the Langeloth Foundation