

**“Enough is Enough”**  
**A Sermon by**  
**The Reverend Bill Clark**

Recently, I have developed a very bad habit – not really so recent since November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 actually, I have developed the habit of waking each morning to check the news, mainly CNN or the New York Times to see if he who must not be named is still our leader – always half expecting some news of his departure. Well here it is ten months later and nothing as of yet.

However, this has got me into the very bad habit of beginning my day with the news. Of late, this has changed with me renewing my hour meditation practice first thing in the morning. Although this past Monday morning I was unable to meditate because the roof repair men had begun their work on repairing the barn roof from a few very bad leaks – definitely not conducive to quiet meditation.

So I sat at my computer to see the news. It was all about Las Vegas. We have all heard the stories by now – and have read and re-read the headlines.

“Biggest Mass Murder in the United States!” How many times have you heard that this week? The way it was broadcast it almost sounded like a badge of honor. Once again the United States are the biggest at something!

My initial reaction, interesting to observe, was to immediately get up and make myself a cup of coffee – I mean real coffee. Since my meditation retreat in July and August I have been drinking only decafe – and mostly decafe teas. My second reactionary thought was to escape the rather loud noise above and “treat” myself to a good breakfast of bacon and eggs. In other words my reaction was one of self-indulgences – indulgences that are NOT in any way shape or form good for me or my health. Why is that? Why after hearing of the massacre of 59 people out enjoying a concert was I turning to self-destructive behavior?

On social media a colleague wrote the following letter which gave me an answer:

**Dear Congress,**

**I’m a minister. I’ll take care of the thoughts and prayers. You take care of passing sensible gun control legislation.**

**Sincerely and angrily,**

**Rev. Emily Gage**

This was it! It was the anger, which took over my body and mind. I was angry!! And this anger replaced any hope I had ever felt for the future of this country – my country – our country!

And much of this anger has not diminished over the week. As a meditator - I am observing it and the sensations it produces in my body – mostly heartburn at this point) but most of the time it builds and builds and builds. (demonstrate the sign

fire in the belly anger) I am not angry at the shooter himself – whatever his name was – I think he obviously was a deranged and sick individual. My anger, perhaps like some of you is at the leadership of this country.

We have had so many of these mass killings. Indeed, as [The New York Times pointed out this week](#), in the 477 days from June 1, 2016, to Oct. 1, 2017, there were 521 mass shootings. Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell stated this week "I think it's particularly inappropriate to politicize an event like this that just happened in the last day and a half. It's entirely premature to be discussing about legislative solutions," finding a long enough lull to discuss this issue is almost impossible. There will always soon be another shooting.

To add to the fury, Harvard Researcher, David Hemenway, wrote; Since 1970 more Americans have died from guns (including suicides, murders and accidents) than the sum total of all the Americans who died in all the wars in American history – going back to the American Revolution. Every day – every day some 92 Americans die from guns and American kids are 14 times as likely to die from guns as children in other developed countries. (*NYT: Nicholas Kristoff; 10/2/17*)

So what is to be done? One Congressman, Steve Israel said Congress is already doing what it sees as its part. Flags have been lowered, thoughts and prayers tweeted, and sometime this week it will perform the latest episode in the longest-running drama on C-Span: the moment of silence. It's how they responded to other mass shootings in Columbine, Herkimer, Tucson, Santa Monica, Hialeah, Terrell, Alturas, Killeen, Isla Vista, Marysville, Chapel Hill, Tyrone, Waco, Charleston, Chattanooga, Lafayette, Roanoke, Roseburg, Colorado Springs, San Bernardino, Birmingham, Fort Hood and Aurora, at Virginia Tech, the Washington Navy Yard, and the congressional baseball game practice, to name too many. There is more candle wax dripping in town centers and town squares than ever and still nothing changes.

I recall after the tragedy in Newtown CT. and the killing of 26 children – children mind you – that certainly now things will change. But has Congressman Israel stated the debate very quickly turned into the right of gun owners rather than the rights and safety of our children.

As [David Frum points out](#) in The Atlantic, the five years since the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School "have seen one of the most intense bursts of gun legislation in U.S. history." More than two dozen states have passed new gun laws. And in almost all cases these laws have made it easier to buy or carry guns. Mind boggling.

It is the second amendment and the rights of gun owners, which seems to be a stumbling block. It was revealed the shooter in Las Vegas an alarming arsenal of 23 weapons and accessories, including semiautomatic rifles, scopes and hundreds of rounds of ammunition — much of which could be legally purchased in Nevada. An undisclosed number of the weapons at the crime scene are believed to have been modified with technology known as a "bump-stock" that allows for rapid firing, similar to a machine gun. Finally there has been some movement in this arena as some — mind you some Republican leaders are re-thinking a ban on any bumper-stocks for weapons.

Let us look at the second amendment from a historical perspective. It states: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," there are some words typically left out as proponents and the NRA raise their collective voices. One is **regulated!** Regulation implies some regulations are needed and necessary both within the forming of militias and in the right to bear arms. Secondly if we really closely explore the timing of this amendment the promise to retain the militias were drawn up by the south to keep the slaves from rebelling.

They wanted to make absolutely certain that no slave — free or not — would ever be able to obtain a firearm. So let us name the inherent racism built into the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment. (*Tell joke on Late Night TV*)

And although I have read recently of some calling for a total abolishment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment — I sincerely doubt if such action will ever occur. But they are certainly small increments, which can be added to secure more gun safety. And certainly these kinds of steps are not new to the Federal Government. New York Times reporter, Nicholas Kristoff reminds us that we've reduced the auto fatality rate per 100 million miles driven by more than 95 percent since 1921. There was no single solution but rather many incremental efforts: seatbelts, air bags, padded dashboards, better bumpers, lighted roads, highway guardrails, graduated licenses for young people, crackdowns on drunken driving, limits on left turns, and so on. We haven't banned automobiles, and we haven't eliminated auto deaths, but we have learned to make automobiles safer — and we should do the same with guns.

We will most assuredly need such out of the box thinking to reduce the gun violence plaguing our nation. We also will need removing the cash out of politics so those Senators and Congressmen and women who rely heavily on campaign contributions from the NRA are held accountable. The New York Times, you know that leftist failing and fake newspaper, recently published the names and amounts each government official receives from the NRA — both Democratic and Republican — as the old adage always states — follow the money — follow the money!

Yet, today my friends cannot be just about our anger, resentment or frustrations. There will always be plenty of that to go around. Today is also the day of immense sadness and grief – sadness and grief for all those lives lost, so suddenly and randomly with many so so young – all so so innocent – as well as the hundreds upon hundreds who were injured. The impact on any human beings witness to such tragedy and devastation will certainly take its toll psychologically, emotionally and spiritually on all for years to come. It will take, as the poem I used last week stated that Brave Space – “together we will create brave space; because there is no such thing as a safe space; this space will not be perfect – but it will be our brave space together – we will work in it side by side.” Or as the poet Berry reminds us; I come into the peace of wild things; Who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting their light. And For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Often time we use the word grief when the loss of a relative or close friend hits us whether expected or suddenly and unexpectedly. But this kind of grief, now, feels somewhat different a bit foreign to us – for it is grief and sadness for people miles away, across this great nation – people we did not know – people we had no personal contact or relationship with – still people none the less – like us – fellow American’s out simply enjoying some of there favorite music together. All of them had circles of friends – relatives – church members – all were someone’s, mother or father, brother, sister aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin or, BFF’s friends for life. Now all of those circles have been impacted – lives shattered – for reasons we may never know.

However, for me, writing about it – talking about it – leaning on one another or – feeling – just feeling all the myriad of emotions surrounding these events – brings some sense of comfort to the grief and loss.

So you may have noticed the many votive candles surrounding our chancel this morning. There are fifty-nine. In a few moments I will invite you up – if you wish – first to take the name out of this basket – the name of one of 59 people killed in Las Vegas – and come forward and light a candle to honor that name and that life. You may say the name aloud or quietly – take it home if you want – whatever moves you. For today is about honoring those Americans who died – remembering that grief is the honor we have for loving.

This time is yours.

### **Emily plays America the Beautiful**

I will close today with a story about a man named A.J. Muste

A story I believe I have told here before but bears repeating. During the Vietnam War Mr. Muste, then in his eighties, stood in front of the White House night after night with a candle. Sometimes others joined him. Often times he stood alone. One night a reporter interviewed him as he stood there in the cold and rain. "Mr. Muste," the reporter said, "do you really think you are going to change the policies of this country by standing out here with a candle?" A.J. Muste answered: "Oh I don't do this to change the country. I do this so this country won't change me." (Andrea Ayvizian, The Sun, Nov. 1994).

My friends, may we go forth from here never permitting the gun laws in this nation to change us but rather continue — holding our candles – high and even higher – holding up our light – so the light deep within all us will not and cannot be diminished by a government unable or unwilling to take a stand against the gun violence we are all facing. May our lights – with all the possibilities for the hopes we carry – may those lights continue to shine and shine and shine!! Amen and Blessed Be