

## **May 15 - More Responses to Buffalo Shooting and Before You Sign Registration, Gun Violence Legislation**

Our hearts are broken at the news of a mass shooting at a Tops Supermarket in Buffalo. The shooter, Payton Gendron, an 18 year old man espousing white supremacist views, used a gun with additional magazines, to shoot 13 people, killing 10 of them. Of the 13 he shot, 11 were Black. He traveled many miles from his home in Conklin, New York in Broome County which is not far from the Pennsylvania state line. He was an engineering student at SUNY Broome Community College but is no longer enrolled.

According to [\*\*this article in the New York Daily News\*\*](#), Mr. Gendron “was influenced by a New Zealand white supremacist who murdered dozens of people in a pair of shootings three years ago, according to a 180-page manifesto posted online. He wrote a terrifyingly cold ‘questions and answers’ section in the manifesto that spelled out the white nationalist beliefs that he said led him to plot the Buffalo attack.

*He said the ‘particular person that radicalized (him) the most’ was Brenton Tarrant, the man who [\*\*murdered 51 people\*\*](#) in shootings at two New Zealand mosques in 2019.*

*The manifesto also named several other people who inspired Gendron, including Dylann Roof, the young man who killed nine Black people at a church in South Carolina in 2015, and Anders Breivik, the Norwegian man who killed 77 people in 2011.*

*The chilling document described how Gendron planned the attack to the tiniest detail. ‘Zip code 14208 in Buffalo (the zip code for Tops Friendly Market) has the highest Black percentage that is close enough to where I live,’ Gendron wrote.*

*He also said he bought body armor to protect himself from bullets fired by security at the store. Police leaders said Gendron gunned down the security guard, a retired Buffalo police officer, before continuing his rampage.*

*Gendron’s manifesto also included pages and pages of anti-Semitic rants — but his attack plan focused solely on Black people.”*

At this time, people of faith or no faith along with imams, pastors, rabbis, and other clergy across the state are surely trying to figure out what to do or say to their communities as they sort out their own feelings in light of their religious and secular traditions. On Saturday night, I reached out to my friend and colleague, The Reverend James Giles, President of Back to Basics Ministries in Buffalo for his thoughts and counsel. He wisely said it was too early for recriminations but that we need to call on God for his divine guidance at this time and comfort the broken hearted. He noted that many people will be gathering for prayer and worship in the Tops parking lot tomorrow morning. He also stressed, as did Governor Hochul, that it is still too easy to obtain semi-automatic weapons in New York which is designed to do nothing but kill human beings. We need to follow the Governor's lead in supporting gun control legislation which has been in front of the Assembly and Senate for a while now but may surface for deliberation and a vote on Tuesday. More information to follow.

As we mourn, let us have deep empathy and love for the family and friends of those who have died and for the people of Buffalo who are really struggling and are having trouble comprehending a tragedy of this scale—the worst mass shooting in Buffalo history.

We also pray for the family of the shooter and Mr. Gendron himself, and our brothers and sisters in Conklin and Broome County. May our prayers lead us to venture out into our communities to listen, be present, pray, speak, and act as the spirit may lead us. I am in communication with other faith leaders and community people around the state to discern next steps on how best to respond.

The Reverend Darius Pridgen, Senior Pastor, True Bethel Baptist Church, spoke to this crisis this morning. You can [view his remarks here](#) where he called on churches to take white supremacy more serious and to act.

## **Here is a [list of services in Buffalo on Sunday.](#)**

Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church will be holding morning services at 11:30 a.m. They are located at 237 E North Street in Buffalo. You can watch their live stream here:

<https://macedoniabuffalo.com/watch>.

A 3:30 p.m., Bishop Sean Rowe of the Episcopal Dioceses of Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania, will lead a virtual prayer service on Zoom and [Facebook Live](#). Details are available on the [Episcopal Dioceses website](#).

Pastor Julian Cook from Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church will be hosting a citywide interfaith prayer service at 4 p.m. with religious leaders from across the City will be in attendance.

In light of [Saturday's shooting](#) at the Tops Market on Jefferson Avenue in Buffalo, a local church is asking for the community to come together in prayer. Rev. Dr. Todd Leach, a Senior Pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Buffalo, issued the following note Saturday evening:

*Dear Westminster Community,*

*Details of the horrific shooting within our Buffalo community have not yet been completely revealed, but the news thus far proves to be nightmarish. What we do know at this point is that a beautiful Saturday turned tragic as scores of our neighbors experienced an evil atrocity by one person with a gun, who apparently had an evil mission to steal the lives of the innocent.*

*We certainly need more than thoughts and prayers, but I believe these can be a beginning. Tomorrow (Sunday) evening at 5:00 PM we will gather in the sanctuary to offer a prayer service. I encourage you to attend so we may lift our neighbors in prayer as we commit ourselves to journeying alongside them. Together, may we live more fully into our motto of being a city of good neighbors.*

*See you in church and in the community,*

*Todd*

Your counsel is most welcome in shaping further responses and being present to others. If you wish to call me to discuss I can be reached at 508-380-8289 or [Pcook@nyscoc.org](mailto:Pcook@nyscoc.org).

As we pray and discern together, I am reminded of the Gospel of John reading from today's lectionary where Jesus said: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:33 to 35

If you are looking for a hymn to speak to gun violence, I commend this hymn to you from Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

### God, In Our Church's Teaching

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2021

Aurelia  
Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864

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Email: carolynshymns@gmail.com | New Hymns: www.carolynshymns.com

Tune: Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864 ("The Church's One Foundation")

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Email: [carolynshymns@gmail.com](mailto:carolynshymns@gmail.com) New Hymns: [www.carolynshymns.com](http://www.carolynshymns.com)

Permission is given for free use of this hymn by local churches and ecumenical groups, including for streaming online in worship services. You do not need to write for permission to use this hymn.

Please share this hymn with pastors, church musicians, worship planners, activists and others who might find it helpful.

A music video of this hymn, recorded by Rev. Casey Carbone for recording this video, can be viewed by clicking here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR7t3mJOg4w>

Finally, I invite you to reference your denomination's social statements on gun violence, racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism and also consult the website of GunsenseNY.org among others.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

In love and faith,

+Peter

## **Before You Sign – Webinar – Advocating for your House of Worship in the Development Process**

"**On Thursday, May 19, from 2:00 to 3:30 PM** the Partnership for Faith-Based Affordable Housing and Community Development will present "Before You Sign...", a workshop designed to help faith communities better understand the real estate development process. In the face of great financial pressures made more difficult by the COVID-19 pandemic, many houses of worship are considering selling or re-developing their property. In this workshop, we will cover the steps to take before pursuing a deal, and ways to advocate for the best possible outcome for you and your community when working through the development process."

**PLEASE REGISTER FOR EVENT HERE**

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR FAITH-BASED AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRESENTS

# Before You Sign...



## Advocating for Your House of Worship in the Development Process

**MAY 19, 2022**

ONLINE EVENT  
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

REGISTER:  
[BRICKSAMDMORTALS.ORG/EVENTS](http://BRICKSAMDMORTALS.ORG/EVENTS)



Funding provided by  
**TRINITY CHURCH**

Panelists Include:

Jason Labate, Partner, Goldstein Hall Attorneys at Law

The Reverend Dr. William Shillady, Executive Director, United Methodist City Society

The Reverend Dustin Wright, Pastor, Messiah Lutheran Church, Rotterdam

Willy Zambrano, Partner, Zambrano Architectural Design

The Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches

The Partnership is funded by a grant from Trinity Church Wall Street and is comprised of Bricks and Mortals, Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative, Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing and the New York State Council of Churches. Together, we offer guidance and forgivable loans to houses of worship of all faiths wishing to repurpose their property to serve their communities to build affordable housing. We also provide guidance for congregations looking to repurpose their property for non-housing uses (arts centers, schools, day cares, rental). We also help congregations look at their options for energy use and to promote policies which address the affordable housing crisis including encouraging landlords to accept Emergency Housing Vouchers.

For more guidance on the pre-development process please see [WWW.IAHONY.org](http://WWW.IAHONY.org),

You can also contact Kevin Ritter, Program Manager, at Kevin@Judson.org for more information about pre-development for housing and non-housing uses.

To participate in our Interfaith Landlord Locator Project go to:

<https://www.nyscoc.org/take-action/housing-justice>

For energy consultation for your congregation, contact, Peter Cook, at Pcook@NYSCOC.org or 508-380-8289.

**Remember to frequently [visit our website](#) which is updated daily with new information and events.**

\For more information on our legislative ask, seminars and town halls around the budget and proposed bail, raise the age, and discovery rollback [click here](#).

The New York State Council of Churches relies on contributions to carry out its ministry, [please donate](#)

Also, [like us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#)