

**May 2023**  
**Peace and Justice Blog**

**NATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE AWARENESS DAY** by Rev. Cindy Barnum-Steggerda  
**WEAR ORANGE June 2-4, 2023**

Our world, our country, our state, our community has been rocked by gun violence. Active gun shooter drills are now a routine part of our schools. As a parent, pastor, and therapist, I have seen the psychological, spiritual, and physical trauma caused by gun violence. I was raised in, baptized, hold ordination in, and am a member of the Church of the Brethren, a historic peace church, so I know my perspective and how I live out my calling and conviction may be different than yours. My hope and faith is that regardless of where you are on the religious or political spectrum, we can unite together in prayer and action to protect our community, especially our children from gun violence. A 6-month-old child should be safe in their home. A child should feel safe going to school and a parent should feel safe sending their child to school. We should all be able to worship safely without fear of being shot. Everyone in our community should feel safe going to the grocery store.

June 2-4 is National Gun Violence Awareness Weekend. Why wear orange? *“On January 21, 2013, Hadiya Pehleton marched in President Obama’s second inaugural parade. One week later, Hadiya was shot and killed on a playground in Chicago. Hadiya’s friends commemorated her life by wearing orange, the color hunters wear in the woods to protect themselves and others. Wear orange is now observed every June. Thousands of people wear orange to honor Hadiya and the more than 40,000 people who are killed with guns and approximately 85,000 who are shot and wounded every year.”* (wear orange.org)

The Muskegon County Cooperating Churches Peace and Justice Committee is planning a **PRAYER WALK AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE** at the end of August. We hope our interfaith community will partner and join with us. We will be working with Muskegon County, the City of Muskegon, and other entities in our community to make this a safe place. We will begin at Hackley park with music and prayer and move to 7 different locations, to be announced. (We need to have the final details and confirmation before releasing the prayer stops.) This will take place on Sunday, August 27, at 4-6 PM. Orange string backpacks and orange stoles will be given out as supplies last. We encourage all participants to wear orange. We are hoping to tie orange ribbons at our prayer stops and have ribbons for you to take with you. Please plan to join us for a peaceful prayer walk. If you are unable to walk, you may stay in the park to pray and sing. We are arranging musical groups to provide prayer through song. Please check the MCCC Newsletter, Facebook page, and Blast for details.

Cindy Barnum-Steggerda, M Div, LMSW  
Muskegon County Cooperating Churches President 2023