



## Annual MLK, Jr. Day Vigil

Praying for Peace & Remembering All Those Hurt by Gun Violence

Monday, January 18, 2010

### Opening Prayer

The Rev. Wallace Adams-Riley  
Rector, St. Paul's Episcopal Church

### Prayers in Solidarity for the Remembrance of All Those Hurt by Gun Violence

- Rabbi Martin P. Beifield, Jr., Senior Rabbi, Congregation Beth Ahabah
- The Rev. Dr. James Henry Harris, Pastor, Second Baptist Church
- M. Imad Damaj, PhD, President, Virginia Muslim Coalition

### “The Moral Offensive”: Reading from the Works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jermal Mabine, Norfolk State University  
Hampton Roads Youth Leadership Conference

*After his house and the house of a friend were bombed in 1956, Dr. King wrote:*

“After the bombings, many of the officers of my church and other trusted friends urged me to hire a bodyguard and armed watchmen for my house. When my father came to town, he concurred with both of these suggestions. I tried to tell them that I had no fears now and consequently needed no weapons for protection. This they would not hear. They insisted that I protect the house and family, even if I didn't want to protect myself. In order to satisfy the wishes of these close friends and associates, I decided to consider the question of an armed guard. I went down to the sheriff's office and applied for a license to carry a gun in the car; but this was refused.

Meanwhile I reconsidered. How could I serve as one of the leaders of a nonviolent movement and at the same time use weapons of violence for my personal protection? Coretta and I talked the matter over for several days and finally agreed that arms were no solution. We decided then to get rid of the one weapon we owned. We tried to satisfy our friends by having floodlights mounted around the house, and hiring unarmed watchmen around the clock. I also promised that I would not travel around the city alone.

I was much more afraid in Montgomery when I had a gun in my house. When I decided that I couldn't keep a gun, I came face-to-face with the question of death and I dealt with it. From that point on, I no longer needed a gun nor have I been afraid. Had we become distracted by the question of my safety we would have lost the moral offensive and sunk to the level of our oppressors.”

### Poetry Reading & Tributes to Friends Lost to Gunfire

Organized by: Kye Slade, Thomas Nelson Community College  
Past-President, Peer Mediators, Woodside High School, Newport News, VA

### Hearts & Testimonials

Write the name(s) of loved ones injured or killed by gunfire on a heart and place it in the basket. Invitation to offer testimonials about surviving gun violence or in tribute to loved ones lost or injured.

## **“Not Just Who, But What”: Reading from the Works of Dr. King**

Jonathan Jones

Youth Outreach Urban Resources and Services (YOURS)

*During the period of national mourning for President John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote the following:*

“While the question ‘Who killed President Kennedy?’ is important, the question ‘What killed him?’ is more important. Our late President was assassinated by a morally inclement climate. It is a climate filled with heavy torrents of false accusation, jostling winds of hatred and raging storms of violence. It is climate where men cannot disagree without being disagreeable, and where they express dissent through violence and murder. It is the same climate that murdered Medgar Evers in Mississippi and six innocent children in Birmingham, Alabama. So in a sense we are all participants in that horrible act that tarnished the image of our nation. By our silence, by our willingness to compromise principle; by our constant attempt to cure the cancer of racial injustice with the Vaseline of gradualism; our readiness to allow arms to be purchased at will and fired at whim; by allowing our movie and television screens to teach our children that the hero is one who masters the art of shooting and the technique of killing; by allowing all of these developments we have created an atmosphere in which violence and hatred have become popular pastimes.”

### **Closing Litany**

Written by The Rev. W. Mark Koenig, Coordinator, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Read by The Rev. Robert Goodrum, Youth Outreach Urban Resources and Services (YOURS)

READER: We celebrate and give thanks for the life and witness of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

**ALL: Who proclaimed a vision of all people living together,  
And bore witness to the power of nonviolence,**

READER: We gather, remembering his words, his commitment, his life  
And to rededicate ourselves to addressing the evil of gun violence

**ALL: which claimed his life and which continues to plague our country and the world.**

READER: Some 30,000 Americans die by guns each year in the United States.

**ALL: And we grieve.**

READER: On average, eighty people are killed by guns every day, including eight children.

**ALL: And our hearts break.**

READER: Guns kill some 1,000 people each day in the developing world.

**ALL: And we mourn.**

READER: An American child is twelve times more likely to die by a gun than are the children who live in all twenty-five industrialized nations combined.

**ALL: And we weep.**

READER: The annual economic cost of gun violence in America is estimated to be at least \$100 billion. Medical costs, decimated families, the court system, our jails and prisons, and security measures in airports, schools, and public buildings all contribute to this sum.

**ALL: And sorrow sweeps over us.**

READER: Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gun fire within our own country than American servicemen and women who were killed in all our wars of the 20th century.

**ALL: And we pray.**

READER: Faced with gun violence,

**ALL: We grieve for those who are killed and those whose lives are forever changed;  
We seek comfort for those who have lost loved ones;  
We pray for a change of heart for those who resort to violence.**

READER: Faced with gun violence, may we

**ALL: Educate;**

**Organize;**

**Advocate;**

**And work in all the ways we can for that day when**

**Guns and weapons of destruction**

**Are transformed into instruments of healing.**

READER: May it be so.

**ALL: May we so do.**

### **Closing Prayer**

The Rev. Tony O. Harris, Riverview Baptist Church

### **Lie-In for Peace**

All those wishing to participate in a peaceful demonstration for an end to gun violence are invited to join a three-minute lie-in after the vigil's concluding litany.