Gun Violence in the United States: A Kyrie
_After Parkland, Florida, February 14, 2018_

When we fail to advocate
  for gun law reform;
  for sensible restrictions on purchase
  for limiting the power of those who benefit from the gun industry

_Lord, have mercy._

When we project blame for gun violence on to
  those with mental illness,
  those who are strangers,
  those who are immigrants

_Christ, have mercy._

When we fail to work for a “dis-armed” society,
  To advocate for justice, health care, education for all,
  To learn to talk through fears and communicate across boundaries
  To work to establish a “Just world for all”

_Lord have mercy._

_May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sin, and lead us to life in peace and abundance._

_Or_

_In Christ, who makes all things new, we are forgiven our sin and given courage to create new ways of peace and justice in our world._

They are All Our Ancestors Now:
_Creating Litanies of Lament and Empowerment to Address Gun Violence in the US_

A Litany is an ancient Christian pattern of prayer which is used to call on the power of the communion of saints to intercede with God for the needs of the living. Saints are called by name, and the community responds: Pray for us!

The point of a litany is to bring the spiritual power of those who have died to bear on the situation of the present moment. The form of a litany is call and response, with a rhythm
established between leader and responders. The number of names and simplicity of responses allows those praying to go deeply into the moment in order to bring into the space all those they call upon. Saints, ancestors, witnesses are invited in to share the burden of lament or urgency, to contribute wisdom, comfort, hope.

Litanies are a right-brained activity, (although in recent years prayer leaders often burden them with information). It is the rhythm that helps to create a space for grace; for memory, imagination, and spiritual encounter to do their work.

The cloud of witnesses to gun violence in the last 20 years in the US is enormous. Since the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, there have been 70 mass shootings; there has been only one year without a mass shooting; most years have multiple shootings. (Mother Jones’ statistics have been used in preparing this material; there are other ways of counting and presenting the material https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/)

A litany calls on those who have died: our prayers may encompass traditional saints, ancestors in family or struggle, the cloud of witnesses to the Holy, to Christ, to the Spirit at work in the world, but here, especially, all those who have died in events of gun violence in the US.

Children, youth, teachers at school, devout folks at prayer, adults at work, elderly and their caregivers in nursing homes, music lovers at concerts, dancers at clubs,— their lives violently ended; their futures lost.

They are all our ancestors now: peculiarly American ancestors, whose diverse lives were lost to a peculiarly American confluence of rage, hate, mental illness—and most critically—easy access to guns.

Below are the makings of a “Make Your Own Litany” of those who have died since the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. There are 70 names of places listed in reverse chronological order, with the numbers killed included. You may use all 70; you may divide them into categories; you may focus on schools or houses of worship, for example—whatever works in your context. Using all 70 may seem daunting, but it may set up the spiritual space for prayer, lament, confession, even hope for change.

Context: Give some thought to what you are praying this litany for: Solidarity with victims? Wisdom to know how to change? Empowerment to make changes? As with all prayers, clarity of purpose is a help to give voice, although sometimes we must rely on the Spirit to pray for us.
Responses: the classic is “Pray for us”—others could be “Pray with us”, “We Remember You”, “We mourn for you”, ¡Presente! (inspired by justice movements in Central and South America, including School of the Americas Watch) and many other possibilities.

Names: (included is a possible way of presenting them, with city or state, when available. Use as much or as little information as seems good to you).

The Stoneman Douglas High School Seventeen
The Pennsylvania Carwash Four
The Rancho Tehama Five
The Texas First Baptist Church Twenty six
The Walmart Three
The Edgewood Business Park Three
The Las Vegas Strip Fifty Eight
The San Francisco UPS Three
The Pennsylvania Supermarket Three
The Florida Awning Manufacturer Five
The Rural Ohio Nursing Home Three
The Fresno Three
The Fort Lauderdale Airport Five
The Washington Cascade Mall Five
The Baton Rouge Police Shooting Three
The Dallas Police Shooting Five
The Orlando Pulse Nightclub Forty nine
The Kansas Excel Industries Three
The Kalamazoo Six
The Colorado Planned Parenthood Clinic Three
The Colorado Springs Three
The OR Umpqua Community College Nine
The Chattanooga Military Recruitment Center Five
The Charleston Mother Emmanuel Church Nine
The WI Trestle Trail Bridge Three
The Marysville-Pilchuck High School Five
The Isla Vista CA Six
The Fort Hood (2014) Three
The Alturas Tribe Four
The Washington Navy Yard Twelve
The Hialeah Apartment Seven
The Santa Monica Six
The WA Pinewood Village Apartment Five
The Mohawk Valley NY Five
The Sandy Hook Elementary Newtown CT Twenty-seven
The MN Accent Signage Systems Seven
The WI Sikh temple Seven
The CO Aurora Theater Twelve
The Seattle Cafe Six
The Oikos University killings Seven
The GA Su Jung Health Sauna Five
The Seal Beach CA Eight
The Carson City, NV IHOP Five
The Tucson Six
The CT Hartford Beer Distributor Nine
The Parkland WA Coffee Shop Four
The Fort Hood (2009) Thirteen
The Binghamton NY Fourteen
The Carthage, NC Nursing Home Eight
The Kentucky Atlantis Plastics Six
The Northern Illinois University Five
The Kirkwood MO City Council Six
The Omaha Westroads Mall Nine
The Crandon WI Six
The Blacksburg Virginia Tech Thirty-Two
The Salt Lake City Trolley Square Six
The Lancaster Co Amish School Six
The Capitol Hill WA Seven
The Goleta CA Post Office Eight
The Red Lake MN Ten
The Brookfield, WI Living Church of God Seven
The OH Damageplan Show Five
The Meridian Lockheed Martin Seven
The Melrose PK Navistar Five
The Wakefield MA Seven
The Tampa Hotel Five
The Honolulu Xerox Seven
The Wedgwood Baptist Church Eight
The Atlanta Day Trading Spree Nine
The Columbine High School Thirteen

Eternal rest grant unto them, O God, and let light perpetual shine upon them. May they all rest forever in your Peace. (Traditional prayer for the dead)
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