

Pray and put up a (nonviolent) fight

By [Rachel Marie Stone](#)

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It hasn't even been six months since I quaked irrationally with fear as my husband went off with a friend to a sleepy little cinema in western Pennsylvania, weeks after the Aurora shooting. If my kids went to elementary school, I'd be quaking with fear this morning. As it is, all is not well with my soul, and I am willing to bet that a good many of my friends gave their kids an extra squeeze before putting them on the bus today.

Statistically speaking, these fears are without foundation. Statistically speaking, Mother Julian of Norwich was totally right: *all shall be well, and all will be well, and all manner of thing shall be well*, and my loved ones will never have to fold themselves into a ball in a janitorial closet to escape the spray of ammunition. But statistically speaking, reflecting on the statistics comforts me perhaps 1% of the time. *Mostly six and seven year olds. My God. I have a seven year old.*

When my mind wanders across the bay from the house where I grew up to the lovely old town where families sit by Christmas trees where presents will lie unopened, where there will be no begging to stay up until midnight to ring in the New Year, where children will return after the holidays to new teachers because the 'old' ones were killed in the line of duty, where the children themselves are *no more*...I can just barely gasp out one of the essential prayers: *God, help. God help them.*

And then I remember: *we* are the hands and feet of God. Not that there is anything that most of us can do for these specific, shattered families (unless you happen to know them.) Their lives have fallen like a china dish to a concrete floor, and while they will spend years carefully gathering and super-gluing the fragments with the help of God, friends, counselors, antidepressants, rest, and time, their lives will forever be a broken dish that's been repaired. Not every shard will be found, and they'll always be cracked. Handled gently, they will hold together, but they will never be whole.

But there is more to the story than just Aurora, or Sandy Hook. There are *thirty thousand* gun-related deaths in the United States each year—something like twenty times more than the next twenty wealthy countries in the world. Children in the US are *13* times more likely to be killed by guns than children in other industrialized countries. As Nick Kristof [wrote](#), *“more Americans die in gun homicides and suicides in six months than have died in the last 25 years in every terrorist attack and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq combined.”*

Not exactly statistics to take comfort in. And yet, in the crazy world of American politics, “gun control” divides people down the middle, with both sides unable to understand the other. The problem is not people in Montana who have hunting rifles and the odd 357 in case they meet a bear. The problem is that there are more regulations on automobiles than on arms, so that people who want to obtain weapons that have *no other purpose than killing people*—can we be grown-up about the difference between hunting rifles and assault weapons and handguns, please?—can do so with frightening ease.

Lines like “guns don’t kill people, people kill people,” and “if you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns” are purely ideological: pithy substitutes for a look at the facts, which are that *guns make killing people shockingly, even accidentally, easy and if you implement strict regulations, it will be harder even for outlaws to get guns and if an armed citizenry were the answer, why has this almost never prevented one of these horrific episodes?*

Christians have, rightly, been pointing out that this is a part of the brokenness of the world, that we must cry out to God for healing, that this is a time for prayer, and so on. But if we are the hands and the feet of God for the comfort and helping of the hurting and the grieving, are we not the hands and feet of God for *preventive care?*

Ever since Constantine had his soldiers put a cross on their shields, Christians have been divided on something that Jesus was shockingly unambiguous about: *violence perpetuates violence perpetuates violence perpetuates violence perpetually*--and you don’t get to wield or excuse or perpetuate violence in Jesus’ name. That’s blasphemy.

But in many quarters, it seems, to break ranks with conservative American values and say ‘enough with the guns that have no purpose except to kill people’ is a greater blasphemy.

If the name of Jesus is on you--and if you call yourself *Christian*, it is--then for someone to perpetuate violence in *your* name is blasphemy. And so I say to lawmakers who won't stand up to the NRA, who won't require insurance companies to provide adequate coverage for mental health care, who wage undeclared wars, who criminalize those who should be hospitalized: *not in my name*.

Yes, this is a time to pray. To pray, and to put up a (nonviolent) fight.

Originally posted at [Stone's blog](#)