



## What Will We Do?

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Your quiz for the day:

What comes in a “flamboyance”? Flamingos, correct!

What comes in a “crash”? Rhinoceroses, you are right!

What comes in a “spate” or a “rash”?

If you answered, “mass shootings” you would be correct. It would also show how conditioned we have become to violence that as soon as we mention a “spate of...”, we know what’s coming.

The recent shootings reveal a lot about our society and its perversion from God’s intentions.

In Buffalo, New York, a white gunman opened fire in a grocery store, after having surveyed its demographics to target a primarily Black population. He timed his rampage for an hour that would be the busiest. The shooter described himself as “a fascist, a White supremacist and an anti-Semite” who worried about the dwindling size of the White population and claims of ethnic and cultural replacement of Whites. Ten people are dead because of the dual scourge of racism and gun violence.

In Laguna Woods, California, a Chinese man killed one and injured several others in a shooting that targeted members of the Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian Church. It is reported that he had hatred for Taiwan, where he had lived. Prior to the rampage, the shooter had reportedly suffered a head injury that led to his deteriorating mental condition. Gun violence, nationalism/racism, and mental illness intersect to destroy lives.

Closer to home, shootings in Milwaukee have been on the increase, including a recent night of shootings following a Milwaukee Bucks game. According to [an NPR article](#), “Of Milwaukee's 193 killings in 2021, 180 were by firearms. Another 873 people were wounded in shootings, according to police data.

“This year, the pace is even worse. Milwaukee has already recorded 77 killings, a 40% increase from the same time in 2021. The number of nonfatal shootings this year is 264, two less than from the same time a year ago.”

As this “rash” of shootings hit the news, I read the prayers and condolences offered through a Presbyterian mid-council (presbytery and synod) leaders’ email group offered for the victims of these shootings. We can be pastoral in these moments, as we comfort those who grieve. But, one mid-council leader asked the question that was on everyone’s mind, “So what should we - as mid-council leaders - do?” Indeed, what do we do?

I share this prayer which poses a similar challenge, offered by the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, president and executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency: “God of Life, As the sound of gunfire echoes over our land once again, we seek your love and compassion. Too many times, O God, we have cried out to you when family, friends, neighbors and children have lost their lives from gun violence. Again we cry, ‘How long, O Lord?’



“For those whose lives have been spared and those whose lives are forever changed, we pray. Send your Spirit, O God, to renew our resolve and commitment to work for an end to senseless violence, racial hatred and oppression. In Christ’s name, Amen.”

As we renew our resolve and commitment, I commend to you the resources of the denomination, including opportunities for action as we approach [National Gun Violence Awareness Day](#) (June 3, 2022). What will we do?