

When will we act?

**By Dick Barrett
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Last night I watched the reports of the horrific shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, that claimed the lives of at least 19 children and two adults. That comes less than two weeks after a shooting at a grocery store in my hometown of Buffalo, New York, claimed the lives of 10 people and wounded three others. All of those killed were shot because of the color of their skin. Both acts were committed by two separate 18-year-old males armed with different types of guns, lots of ammunition and wearing body armor. I went to bed last night brokenhearted and grieving for all those who have been personally affected by the latest senseless and preventable killings. I woke up this morning asking, “When will we act?”

As a church and a nation, we should be well past the question that I heard being asked last night, “When will we say enough is enough?” At what point does the right for someone to live become more important than the right to bear arms, no matter what someone believes about the original intent of the Second Amendment?

In 2002 I retired from a 20-year career as a New York state trooper. During most of my time as a police officer I owned two personal guns, a handgun for specific times I was off duty when I felt I might need it due to my employment, and a shotgun for hunting. While these guns were always kept in a safe location and far from any ammunition, when my two sons became teenagers, I removed the guns from my residence. I had personally witnessed too many shootings — intentional, accidental, suicide — by people who had easy access to guns. When I retired, one of the first things I did was to sell my handgun. A couple of years later, when I realized that I probably was no longer going to hunt, I sold the shotgun. I felt a lot safer in my home without guns than with guns.

Since I retired from law enforcement 20 years ago, the number of personally owned guns of all types and the number of mass shootings in the United States have both multiplied exponentially. For those of us who are interested in church growth, we would be excited with growth that reached just a fraction of those percentages.

While people continue to debate the types of guns that are being used in the shootings, from the perspective of those who have lost a loved one at the hand of gun violence, the type of gun used is not their priority. No other so-called “advanced nation” in the world experiences the types and levels of gun violence that have taken place in America over the past 25 years on a regular basis.

I have spent a lot of time recently reflecting on the meaning and purpose of prayer. Ultimately, prayer is the merging of the Kingdom of God in heaven with the Kingdom of God here on earth. It is not just enough to pray to God to bring his Kingdom to earth. When there are actions we can take to help bring it, then we must act. It is time for us to act for the future of our children. It is time for us to act for the Kingdom of God.