



# Healing Violence through Gun Control

**Gathering Your Wisdom for AGNT's  
Training & Community Action Series**





Spiritually Guided

SUM

Social Uplift Ministry  
for Community & World Challenges

Spiritually Guided Social Uplift Ministry is the S.U.M. of our best efforts as a New Thought Movement to “be the change we wish to see in the world,” and to support our neighbors who are underserved and unempowered in creating the lives they desire, and deserve as their human birthright.

**For this topic area we seek your input on:**

- New thought spiritual foundations
- Questions for group dialogue
- Pledge
- Action steps

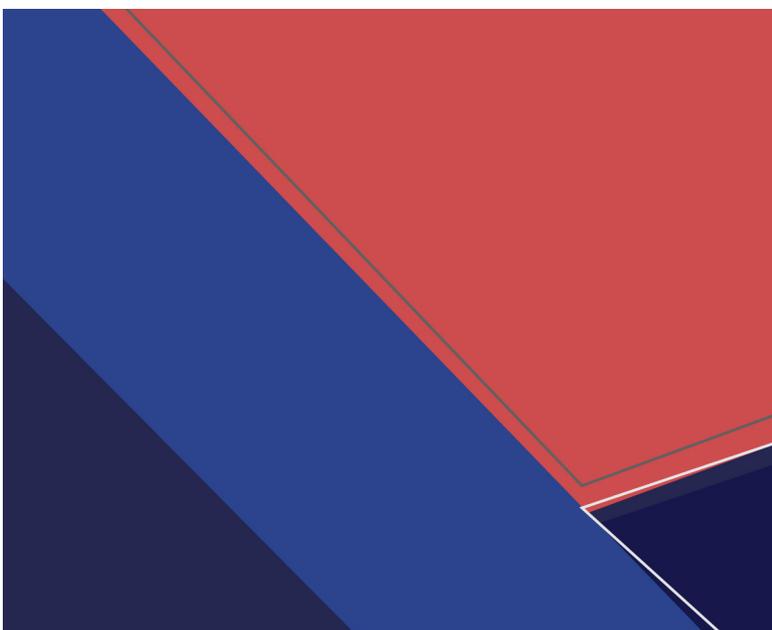


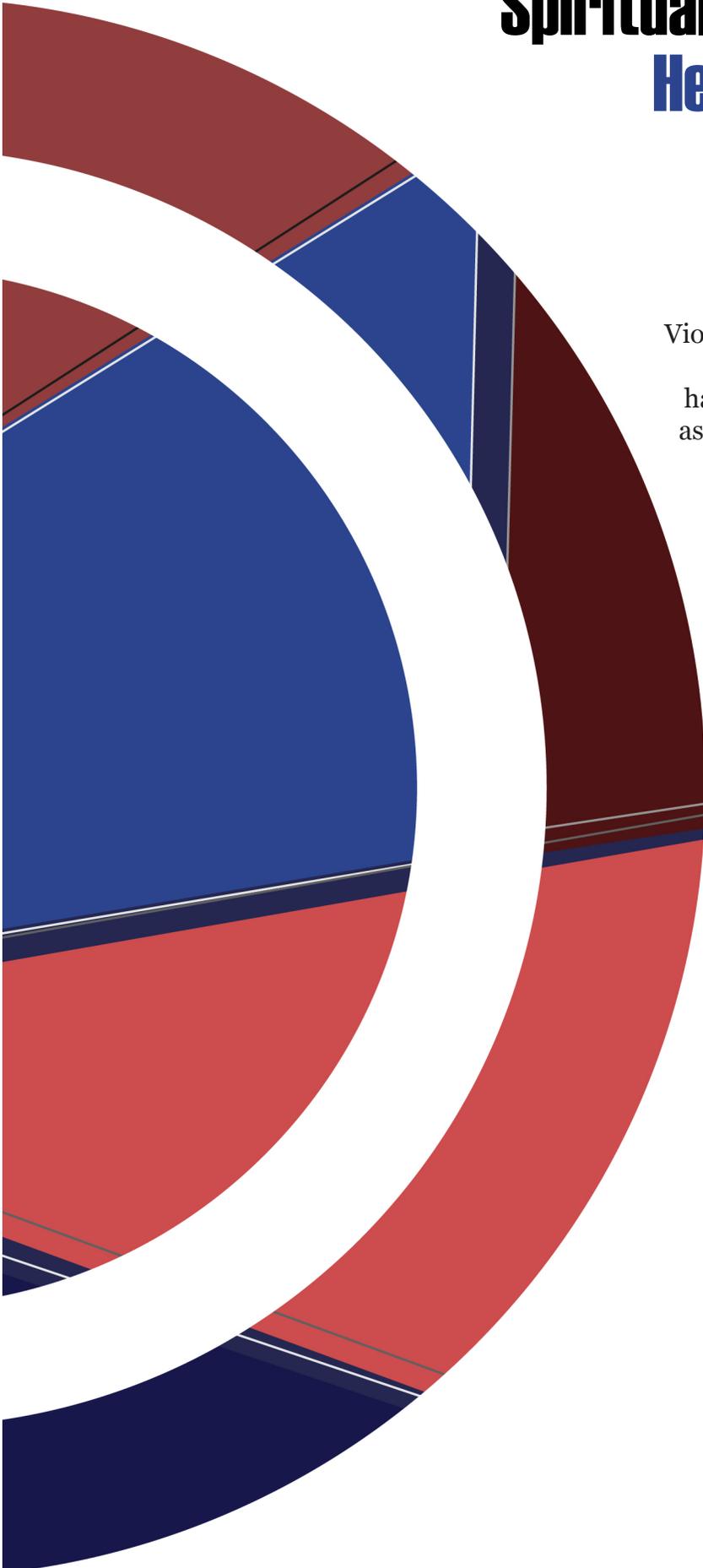
## Why Spiritually Guided Social Uplift Ministry? (S.U.M.) We Become Whole by Doing Our Part

As New Thought communities, our spiritual practice calls us to be agents for social change. Without a supportive community, social change work can be draining, confusing, unsustainable, frustrating, and scattered. The Association for Global New Thought provides a simple but transformative approach to doing social change work, bringing together small groups of friends and colleagues to focus on an issue that connects the congregation, the local community, and AGNT. A *Spiritually Guided Social Uplift Ministry* (S.U.M.) is a place to pray, meditate, build trust, take risks, make mistakes, achieve goals, learn together, and deepen the connection between social change and spiritual growth. Spiritually Guided S.U.M. becomes a home base from which we engage with the world and return for reflection, discussion, and renewal. “S.U.M. is greater when we all do our parts,” and connects us to higher self expression, calling us into right relationship as we walk beside our partners and endeavor to co-create the beloved community.

### What Happens Here?

By following the leadership of communities most impacted by injustice, Spiritually Guided Social Uplift Ministry models restorative justice and builds local capacity for social change. The following list serves as guidelines for groups.

- Building relationships of trust and accountability with communities most impacted by injustice by showing up and staying in the relationships for the long haul
  - Remembering that the liberation of everyone and everything is inherently connected, and together, we are on a learning journey toward it
  - Getting out of your comfort zone (materially, emotionally, and physically)
  - Contemplating the gifts you are going to receive while accompanying, instead of how you will give, help, teach, tell, or fix
  - Unlearning patterns of dominance, like taking charge, leading, making decisions, etc.
  - Walking together while navigating differences in a loving, respectful, trusting relationship
  - Being challenged together, encouraging one another’s spiritual growth
  - Asking for and lending empathic support
  - Moving beyond asking to acting
  - Disrupting the systems and structures of oppression—with integrity and in authentic community with those most impacted, following their leadership
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# Spiritually Guided Activism for Healing Violence through Gun Control

## CONDITION

Violence, which shows up on a large scale in wars, within community systems as tension and hate crimes, and within families and friendships as domestic violence, is widespread globally and impacts our community. There are many specific reasons that people choose violence toward each other and themselves. Many people and communities have not been given the tools to negotiate conflict and to navigate their own challenging needs and feelings without violence.

## UNDERLYING BELIEF CREATING THE CONDITION

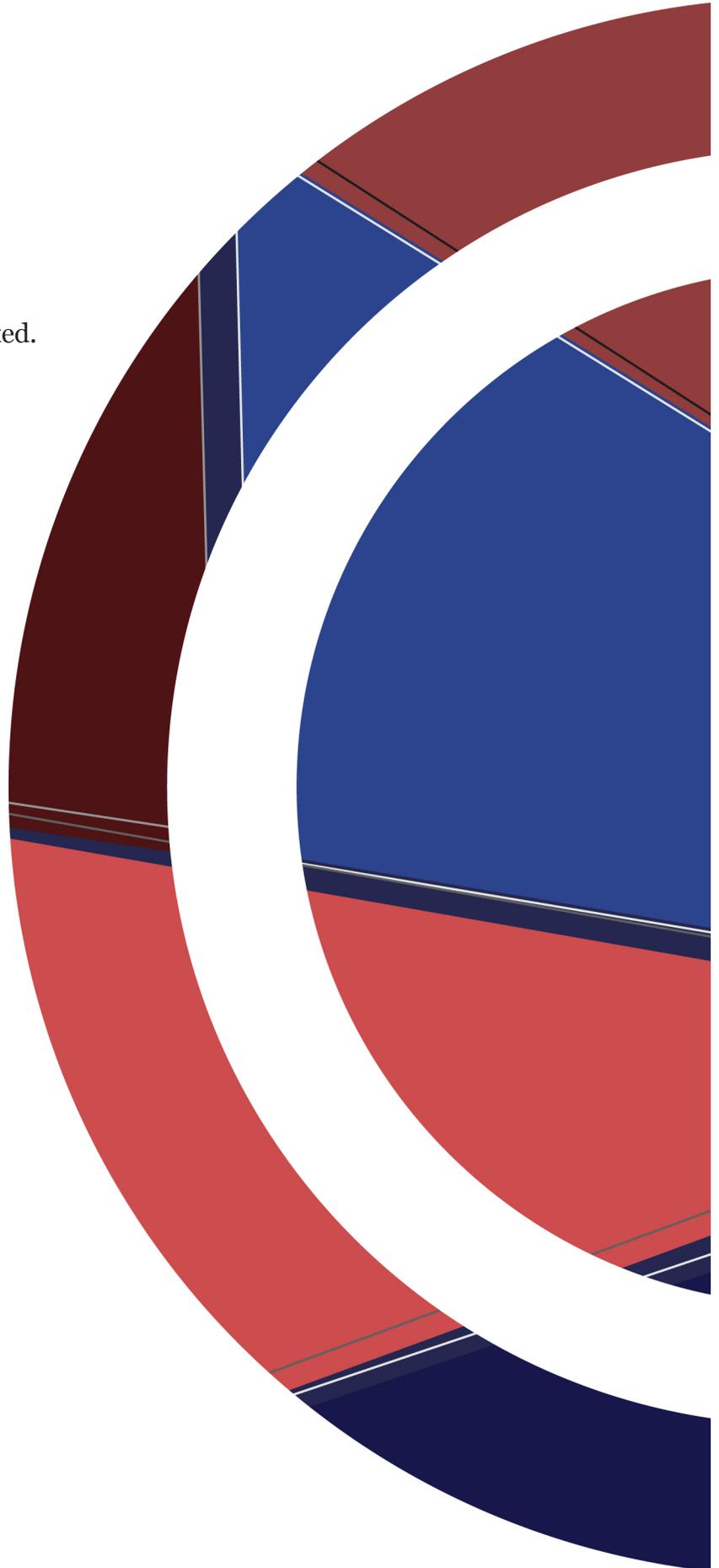
That we are separate from each other and that separation can lead to a dehumanization of others that leads to justification of war and violence. It also stems from a fear that there are not enough opportunities and resources to go around and that power and control can be gained through violence.

## **SPIRITUAL TRUTH**

We are all intimately and inextricably connected.  
Oneness is real and the world is abundant.

## **PRAYER**

All living beings have equal access to Spirit.  
We are all made up of Godstuff and that connects us to everything on the planet.  
We live in an abundant universe and on an abundant planet. We know that there are enough opportunities and resources for communities and that there are peaceful ways to conduct our relationships with each other, ourselves, and the planet. We are grateful for our innate Oneness with each other. We release this prayer knowing that this wisdom is already alive in all beings.



# QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DIALOGUE

## **Critical Opportunities** **CHALLENGES**

The issue of gun control has defaulted primarily to a political debate, Whether victims are kindergarten children, college students, teachers, those working at the Washington Naval Yard, those enjoying a movie, or a United States Member of Congress, why are many of us unable to react based simply on the loss of human life?

## **Guiding Principles** **VALUES**

If you think of yourself as being against gun control, is there any place you would set a limit on the private ownership of weapons? Do private citizens have the right to nuclear weapons? tanks? missiles? machine guns? Where would you draw the line?

## **Transformative Practices** **METHODOLOGY**

The Constitution belongs to the people of the United States, and if the requisite supermajorities agree, the people can amend it to reflect changing mores. Do you believe we should repeal the 2nd Amendment?

## **Social Embodiment** **OUTCOMES**

If we want to lower rates of gun violence, should we first address drug use and mental health problems? Large percentages of those incarcerated for violent crimes committed those acts under the influence of drugs or to obtain money to buy drugs. And a large percentage of mass shooters are mentally ill. How can we better respond to the signs of mental illness and addiction, and do whatever possible to get friends and family the help they need?



## **PLEDGE:**

In the wake of an epidemic of mass shooting in our schools and public spaces the need for law enforcement and the communities they protect to have interactions grounded in mutual respect has never been greater. As a faith community with concern for the good of all, we pledge to advocate for common sense legislation to ban “bump stocks” and any other mechanism that allows for the conversion of a semi-automatic weapon into an automatic weapon; armor-piercing bullets; and gun silencers. Additionally, we pledge to support initiatives that partner with schools, businesses and faith-based and community leaders to create a public awareness campaign designed to improve police and community relationships.

# Healing Violence through Gun Control

The term “gun control”, referring to initiatives designed to restrict unfettered access to guns for all people, is unusual as a word that both liberals and conservatives use - albeit with very different feeling. Also note that “gun control” and “gun rights” are not synonyms but mean very different things to different people.

For advocates of gun control, “gun control” connotes an effort to create a greater level of accountability and regulation when it comes to firearms. They have supported a range of efforts under the gun control banner and argue for more legislation to combat gun violence. Some of these measures include increased background checks, closing the gun show loophole, as well as banning assault weapons and bump stocks.

Traditionally, supporters of gun control believe that the Second Amendment is taken out of context in the modern world, particularly with advances in gun technology that have created deadlier weapons than were available in the 18th Century. A smaller subset argue that all guns should be banned, citing strict gun control policies in the UK and Australia that have led to a reduction in gun violence.

Opponents of gun control use the term pejoratively. In their view, it connotes a threat to individual freedom, a contravention of the Second Amendment, and an inevitable slippery slope towards the restriction of public ability to bear arms. Gun activists point to the difficulty of purchasing and owning guns in traditionally progressive cities and states as evidence that these rights have already been restricted. Gun control opponents typically argue against increasing government regulation and focus on rigorously enforcing current legislation, improving mental health awareness, and bolstering security in public spaces, such as arming teachers in schools.

Gun control opponents argue that limiting gun rights would be unconstitutional, and that a determined criminal will obtain a gun regardless of government regulation.

After the Florida school shooting, some conservatives have split with the party and expressed openness towards certain gun control measures, such as raising the minimum age to buy a rifle and banning high-capacity magazines.

SOURCE: <https://www.allsides.com/topics/guns>

