

Interactive lesson



picture from personal creation

How many of you are familiar with MADD (or SADD)?

Why were those organizations started?

Were they successful?

Since 1980, MADD reports that they have helped to cut drunk driving deaths in half. In 1980, there were approximately 28,000 alcohol-related fatalities in the US. In 2021, 13,384 people died in alcohol-impaired driving traffic deaths in the US.

Do you know how many people are killed by guns in the US?

According to the PEW Research Center, in 2021, 48,830 people died from gun-related injuries in the US.¹

Numerically, how does that compare to the 28,000 deaths from drunk driving in 1980?

John Wesley, who founded Methodism, made a point of trying to help those less fortunate in society. Jesus ministered to everyone, everywhere He went. What do you think they would tell us to do about this issue?

Wearing the color orange this weekend honors the more than 120 lives cut short and the hundreds more wounded by gun violence every day. Yet more than honoring their memories, better would be to stop gun

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>

violence that takes the lives in the first place.

Do you know why there were gun-related injuries?

Again from PEW, 54% were suicides, 43% were murders, and 3% were from accidental, law enforcement, or other/undetermined circumstances. What does over 95% of them being from suicide and murders suggest to you?

What are some things we as a society and as individuals might do to address the issues underlying the gun-related injuries?

Some possible emphases:

- † Increased awareness of the issue
- † Increased gun safety awareness
- † Increased mental health awareness
- † Increased accountability for gun sellers (like opioids, tobacco, alcohol)
- † Increased training and licensing requirements for gun owners (like cars and other motor vehicles)



picture from personal creation

Other suggestions are at the web address on screen (<https://www.umcjustice.org/what-you-can-do/advocacy/take-action>) under the heading Peace with Justice – the same title as today’s special UMCOR Sunday offering.

Do you think some of those things we mentioned are worth trying, to reduce the number of gun-related

deaths per year?

May we find through God's love and mercy, wisdom and effectiveness for dealing with this issue better as individuals and society.

Gospel lesson

Today we hear the great commission.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-disciples/>

Matthew 28:16-20

NRSV

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty" UMH #64

Message: Go Therefore



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/when-god-came-down-like-fire/trinity-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/trinity-sunday-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Almighty three-in-one,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may know You more fully and set out to do *with love* the work You put before us. Amen.

We follow up from Pentecost with a response to the great commission: "Go Therefore"

"Trinity Sunday is about God and not about us.

And yet, because we can know God only in relationship, it has to be about us too."



picture from MMMS collection

When I went up to my son's house in Syracuse, I paused to peek at the nest a robin had built on top of their garage door opener, causing them to leave

their garage door open from the time they discovered it. On that particular day, I was surprised to see that the bird on the edge of the nest did not immediately fly off as I approached.

As you can see from the picture, it was a fledgling, probably about to take its first flight. It froze when it saw me, since that is what hatchlings in the nest instinctively do. From the other side, I also saw its sibling sticking its beak in the air, and their mother further down the driveway, watching me with a bit of worm in her mouth.



pictures from MMMS collection

I thought about the work that mother bird had done preparing for her offspring: First, she found a suitable location, created a home, laid the eggs and incubated them - much like our heavenly parent did for us in creating this world, including our homes and families.

After the eggs hatched, the mother bird stayed close by the hatchlings, keeping them warm and fed until they had grown feathers and were ready to get their own worms. But in order for them to take that first flight, she had to leave the nest and coax them to leave it too.

Jesus did that for us, living as one of us to teach us about God and to show how we are intended to live: in loving relationships with God and with one another. Jesus feeds us as we grow spiritually; we get our strength and develop our knowledge of God from stories about Jesus, until we are ready to share the good news with others.

But to get the disciples to spread the Good News, to go out into the world as apostles, Jesus had to leave them without their Rabbi in their midst. God had to coax them out of their comfort zone.

Just like young birds who spread their wings and discover they can fly to independence, the disciples found that when they accepted the power of the Holy Spirit upon them that they could preach the Word of God throughout the land.



picture from MMMS collection

Later that day I checked the nest before getting into my car again. The nest was empty, with no sign of the baby birds that had been in it. They were off as part of the flock, a new generation to keep the species flourishing in this beautiful world.

You have been fed the Word of God for quite some time. Through our prayers, professions of faith,

sharing in the means of grace, you have been growing in faith in a protected environment and invited the Holy Spirit to be in your life.

But have you yet done more than just flap your wings within the nest? How have you gone outside your comfort zone lately? How have you reached out to share God's love in this wounded, aching world? How are you helping God's kingdom to flourish here and now?

Perhaps, like the disciples after Jesus ascended and before the Holy Spirit came upon them, you are unsure of what to do. We can always PRAY for guidance and LISTEN for the Holy Spirit. Pray for open hearts and minds, to SEE the needs around us that we can address. Ask for guidance, to UNDERSTAND the best way to address those needs.

Take a deep breath, TRUST GOD, and work toward the good God has in mind. Like God created the world, our work will likely be progressive, building on what was done before, and involve time to rest/renew in between various stages.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/when-god-came-down-like-fire/trinity-sunday-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/trinity-sunday-year-a-graphics>

Do not fear to build spiritual nests, relationships of love through which to share the good news. Where

you can, help eradicate sinful behaviors, replacing them with acts of grace. That drives us closer to a world of Peace with Justice, reducing violent deaths and nurturing healthier lives.

We are the new generation of Christians and have been commissioned like those before, that knowing Jesus, we are to GO THEREFORE into the world and share God's grace with all people.