



**TOUGH TOPICS:  
WHAT TO DO ABOUT GUNS?**

**OCT 2025  
ISSUE 06**

# DEAR READER



The world can be a scary place. You might hear in school, or in conversations with adults, about what can happen when people choose to use guns to hurt one another.

For me, the stories of death and violence make me really sad and afraid. I don't like it when people are hurting, and I don't like it when people hurt others.

Sometimes this sadness makes me want to curl up in a ball or cry, but other times it makes me want to do something. I often have a lot of questions about why and how and what can be done.

In this issue, we are going to talk about gun violence. **You may want to read this magazine with an adult.** This is a tough topic, but it is important that we talk about it so we can help fix the problem.

**IF YOU EVER FEEL SCARED OR UNSAFE, PLEASE TELL AN ADULT YOU TRUST. IT IS EXTRA IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER WHEN THE WORLD FEELS HEAVY.**

 *Peace, Miriam*  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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# COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

BY MANDY PARK

Once we learn to talk, the actual skill is pretty easy, isn't it? We open our mouths and the words that are in our brains just come out!

Even if you're not a chatty person, or if you find it hard to talk to people you don't know – you probably have an easy time talking to close friends and family.

**"NONVIOLENCE  
IS A WAY OF LIFE  
FOR  
COURAGEOUS  
PEOPLE."**

Sometimes, that courage might be for something as simple as starting a conversation with someone. Can you think of some reasons that talking to people, even people you know well, might feel hard?

Maybe I want to say something, but I don't know how the person will respond.

**BE  
SMART  
TOOLBOX**

I might be worried they'll make fun of me or get angry, or maybe even that they won't want to be my friend anymore.

One conversation that I find hard is talking to my friends, family, and community about **how important it is to lock up guns.**

Lots of people own guns, which they are allowed to do in the United States, but we also know how important it is for those guns to be locked up properly.

**If we don't, people who shouldn't have guns—like kids!—can get into them and hurt someone else or themselves, even accidentally.**

People don't always like it when I talk about this topic, because they might think I am judging them or saying they are a bad person, and so I know they might get mad at me.

That means it takes courage even to bring it up! But I know it's important, so **I try to find the courage to do it anyway.** I make sure people know I just want kids like you to be safe.

One way I practice is by asking the parents of my own kid's friends about whether guns are in their house and how they are stored before I let my kids go over to their house.

I think of it as **good practice for building courage for even harder conversations.** What courageous conversation can you practice having?

Wow! Even figuring out how to write this took some courage!

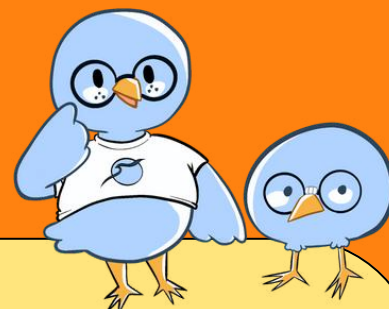
Hey there! Slightly awkward text, but I want to normalize this conversation...

Since my kids spend time at your house, can you tell me if there are guns in the house? And if so, how are they stored?

We don't have any guns but thank you so much for asking and starting these conversations



# Q&A



## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

My friends and I at OEP had some questions about guns that you may also be thinking about. I talked to my friend and teacher, Dr. Katy Gray Brown, who helped me think through what some answers might be. **If you also wonder about these questions, I highly recommend having a conversation with the safe adults in your life!**

## WHY DO PEOPLE HAVE GUNS?

There are many different types of guns, each used for many different things. There are guns that are used for play, like skeet shooting and water guns, and other guns are used to make a noise to draw attention, like a starter's pistol for races or a flare gun. Other guns, such as BB guns and pellet guns, are made for hunting animals. Finally, there are some guns that are made for protection. These guns are powerful, and can hurt people when they are used incorrectly or intentionally.

## ARE ALL GUNS BAD?

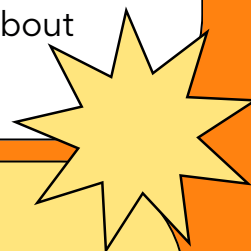
Like many tools, guns are dangerous but they have specific uses. It is important that all guns are used properly and put away correctly so that they are as safe as possible for the people who are around them.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FIND A GUN?

If you find a gun, you might be curious about it. However, it is very important that you do not pick it up. It is important that you and everyone in the room exit safely and find a trusted adult to tell. You can not be sure that the gun is safely locked, so let the adult handle the situation.

## DO I HAVE TO BE SCARED OF GUN VIOLENCE?

First of all, it is normal to be scared. You do not have to be scared, but if you are scared **there is nothing wrong with you**. We hear a lot about gun violence, because many people are working to make the problem better. By talking about what to do if we find a gun, we make sure we can protect each other.



## TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS:

Kids bring up big questions for a diversity of reasons. If they ask broad questions, use follow up questions such as "What makes you ask that?" to better understand more specifically when they are asking about.

Additionally, do not be afraid to name that you need a moment to think about an answer. **Thoughtful answers are far more valuable than answering quickly and possibly contributing to confusion.**

# LOVE FINDS A WAY:

## A Story of a School Shooting

BY EWAN BENJAMIN



In February 2022, I had just started the second half of my first year at college. Life was exciting at Bridgewater College. College is really cool. I got to learn about really cool topics and see my friends every day.

But, life does not always work out the way we expect it to. On February 1st, 2022, Bridgewater College experienced a school shooting. It was scary. Really scary.

Though no students were hurt, two of our safety officers lost their lives while protecting the rest of the school.

My classmates were hiding in bathrooms, closets, classrooms, all over the place. Just like we'd practiced in lockdown drills in school.

I was in the cafeteria with some of my friends, and we looked out for each other, even when we had no idea what was going on. Eventually, the shooter was arrested and we were able to go back to our lives at school.

**BUT, CAN YOU EVER REALLY  
GO BACK TO YOUR OLD LIFE  
AFTER SOMETHING SCARY  
LIKE THAT HAPPENS?**

Out of the pain of loss and fear, **the love within the community grew stronger. No one was alone.**





After the shooting, my friends and I made sure to pay extra attention to each other. We were there for each other when the world didn't seem to make sense. Our whole school seemed to forget everything that made us different from one another.

Our local Church of the Brethren congregation brought us snacks. Special dogs came to the library so that we could play with them. Even the President of the United States (yes, *the President*) saw our community's pain and expressed his sadness.

**At the end of the day, our love and care for each other was bigger than before.**

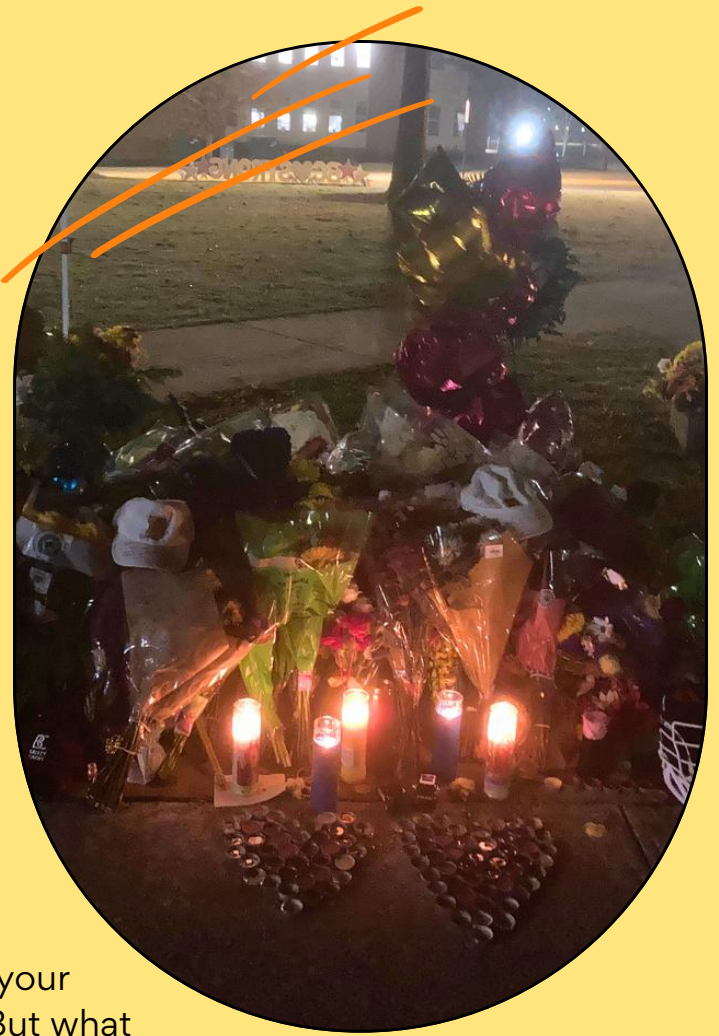
In the Bible, Jesus says that the greatest two commandments are to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself (Matthew 22:34-40). But what if your neighbour causes harm to your community?

It's easy to love my classmates, my teachers, and the safety officers, but it is harder to love someone who hurts other people. **But God loves everyone, even if they do hurtful things. If God loves someone, then, no matter how hard it can be, we have to love them, too.**

Now, three years later, a lot has changed. The school set up a flower garden in memory of the officers. Students started college who never experienced what we had.

**Yet, that love is still there – you can feel it in the air. No matter what bad things happen, love will always overcome it when you have people who care about you, and you care about those people, too.**

When you see your friends, your parents, or your teachers, love them a little bit extra today. You never know who needs a bit of extra love.



**ONE LITTLE ACT CAN BRING YOUR WHOLE COMMUNITY CLOSER TOGETHER. LOVE ALWAYS FINDS A WAY.**

# COLORING BREAK



**These serious topics can be scary and overwhelming. Take a moment to relax and reflect while you color. We chose flowers for this coloring page as they are a sign of both remembrance and growth.**





# BOOK NOOK



***Sparking Peace***  
by Teresa Kim Pecinovsky  
and Hannah Rose Martin  
Reading Age 5-9

***One Thursday Afternoon***  
by Barbara DiLorenzo  
Reading Age 5-7



***Resources from  
OEP's Gun Violence  
Prevention Team***

# HOW TO BE A 'FOUL BUSTER':

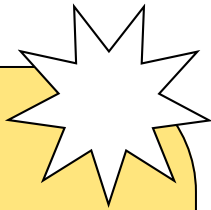
## A Tool to Resolve Conflicts Before They Become Violent

BY BEV EIKENBERRY



**H**ow do you want friends to treat you? Do you want them to be...

- KIND
- INCLUDE YOU
- HELPFUL
- FAIR
- TRUTHFUL
- ENCOURAGE YOU
- STAND WITH YOU
- FORGIVE YOU?



What if someone fouls you? A foul would be...

- CALLING YOU NAMES
- HITTING YOU
- CUTTING IN LINE
- BEING MEAN
- HURTING YOU OR YOUR FRIENDS
- YELLING AT YOU
- LYING



We feel safe when everyone treats each other the way we want to be treated. We do not feel safe when we are “fouled.” So what can we do when we are fouled to get back to feeling safe?

One thing we can practice is a **“foul buster!”** When we are fouled we can ask that person this question: **WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?** Then we need to listen to them.

After they have told you what the problem is it is your turn to say, **“THE WAY I SEE IT IS....”** Tell how it looks to you.

Then ask again, **“HOW DO YOU SEE IT?”** Listen to their answer and think about what you might do. Now you are ready to offer a suggestion of what to do next. **“I AM WILLING TO DO....”**



And tell what you are willing to do to make it feel safe for both of you again. Finally, ask them **“WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO?”**

When you practice a “foul buster” **you are strong and self-confident.** You are ready to cooperate. You can listen and understand.

You can make sure the other person listens to you. **We are all safer when we can talk to each other about what does not feel right or good.**

The practice of “foul busting” keeps problems from becoming bigger. It keeps problems from becoming violent.

We can control how we talk and listen so no one gets hurt!

In this issue we talk about violence between people and the scariness of guns.\* The best way to have no violence between people is to practice good communication.

By standing up when we are fouled and using the “foul buster” practice, we can help ourselves and others feel safe!

**\*GUNS CHANGE THE GAME. IF YOU KNOW A GUN IS PART OF THE CONFLICT, GET OUT OF THERE AND GET AN ADULT.\***

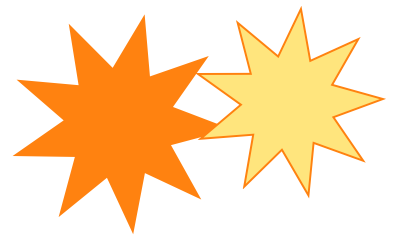
Orby, why is everyone wearing orange? Why does this issue use so much orange?

Sib, that's because orange is a symbol of Gun Violence Prevention. People often wear orange to honor lives lost to gun violence.





# MEET OUR TEAM



## MIRIAM

Miriam Erbaugh is the Children and Youth Peace Formation Organizer for On Earth Peace (OEP) and the Editor-in-Chief of Agape Magazine. Outside of her internship, Miriam is a student at Manchester University. She loves to cook, hike, read, and spend time with her friends and family!



## MARIE & MORGAINE

Marie Benner-Rhoades is one of the co-Directors at On Earth Peace and focuses on youth and young adult peace formation. She appreciates the opportunity to have in-depth conversations with her kids based on the articles. Morgaine, age 11, is our child editor. Her favorite part of the magazine is Orby & Sib!



## HANNAH

Hannah Groff is an illustrator and works as a social media manager for OEP. She works as a preschool teacher and attends West Chester University. Hannah loves art, outdoors, cooking, and playing the piano.



## SYDNEY

Sydney is Communications Support for OEP. For several years, she has worked as an educator for children in various programs and schools. In her free time, she enjoys cafe-hopping, traveling and learn new languages.



## MANDY

Mandy is a theologically-educated Kingian Nonviolence Reconciliation trainer and a member of the Church of the Brethren. She had a key role in launching the Church of the Brethren Gun Violence Prevention (GVP) Action Team. She is also an author and fantasy fan.



## EWAN

Ewan is the Church of the Brethren Nonviolence Organizer for OEP, a former Camp Swatara counselor, and a student at the Center for Justice and Peace at Eastern Mennonite University. His favourite camp songs include The Button Factory and The Swimming Pool song.



## BEVERLY

Beverly is a certified conflict interventionist, former supervisor of Peace Connection Program for elementary students, and a member of the Church of the Brethren. She is OEP's Co-chair of the Board of Directors and is active on the GVP Action Team. She enjoys gardening and playing tennis.



## KATY

Katy is a professor of Philosophy and Peace Studies, and the Director of the Peace Studies Institute at Manchester University.

# IN MEMORY OF CHARLIE

We would like to dedicate this issue in loving memory of Charlie (Charles Alan Stanley), May 1, 2021-May, 30, 2025. Charlie was a bright, charming 4-year old child, who just like any child had passions for the world.

He loved animals, nature, singing, and reading picture books. His family was also a part of the Church of the Brethren. Sadly, Charlie's life was tragically cut short when he discovered an unsecured firearm in his home.

Each of us has the ability to educate ourselves on the issue of gun violence in order to protect, prevent, and honor the lives that have been lost. We hope this edition serves as a reminder that we all have a role in our community to ensure safety and pursue peace and justice for all.

Note: Adapted from Sandi Evans Rogers' speech at 2025 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference



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# AGAPE

**Our next issue is themed  
“Finding Hope!”**

We would like to hear from you about:  
What brings you hope?  
How do you share hope with others?

**We invite you and your adult to  
fill out this form so that we can  
share your ideas in the next issue!**

[Google Form](#)

