



July 6, 2022

To Our Communities, Elected Officials of New York State, and to All of the People living in the Hudson Valley,

We, the clergy leaders and spiritual leaders of the Kingston Interfaith Council are calling for ***an immediate and complete ban of all assault weapons and all modifications of weapons that transform them into assault-style weapons.***

We call upon our neighbors and businesspeople who are financially benefiting from the sale of assault-style weapons to take the moral high ground and to ***immediately cease and desist from all sales of assault weapons and modifications that transform weapons into tools for murder.***

We also ask that our law enforcement: the Kingston Police, the Ulster County Sheriff's department and the NY State Police work together with the full force of their departments, ***to create a massive ongoing buyback program for assault weapons and all guns that people are willing to relinquish as they recognize a moral call to respond to the death and destruction that we have seeded in our American society.***

Our children are being murdered in schools staring down the barrels of assault weapons. Our youth are dying by suicide with the guns in our homes. Our siblings of color are being targeted and murdered in our streets, in our grocery stores and in movie theaters. Our neighbors are being targeted as well as murdered in their houses of worship. We must recognize that what we once called "safe spaces" are now sites of horrific and unspeakable violence, murder and destruction, and sites of lingering and lasting devastation to the communities that surround them and the loved ones, survivors, and support teams left behind. We can change this!

No more hiding behind rhetoric. We call on our politicians and government officials to take responsibility and take action. Our communities expect and demand that you do what is right and necessary to stop these atrocities from continuing to happen.

As leaders of faith communities, we are willing to call out power with truth, we recognize the moral failings of our addiction to guns and the moral failings of complicity and silence. Our shared values and faith traditions teach us: "To save one soul, it is as if you have saved the entire world". "The hurt of one is the hurt of all". "We are our "others" keepers". It is long overdue for us to act.

We, the clergy leaders of the Kingston Interfaith Council, are calling for an immediate and complete ban of all assault weapons and all modifications of any weapon that transform them into assault-style weapons in the Hudson Valley and in New York State.

As leaders of faith, perhaps we ought to be calling for a complete ban on all guns. We refrain from calling for this today for the purpose of bringing *everyone* along with us in our common sense call for saving innocent lives by banning assault weapons. No American citizen needs to be armed with a weapon of war. We want our children to have a future, we want our neighbors to feel safe in their communities, and we want our law enforcement to be able to do their jobs. Our loved ones' lives depend on your having the courage to enact immediate measures to change the trajectory that we are on.

In faith and outrage, demanding action,

Rabbi Yael Romer, DD (she/her) Congregation Emanuel of the Hudson Valley
The Rev Dr Leonisa Ardizzone (she/her) Vassar College/4th Universalist Society
The Rev. Frank J. Alagna, Ph.D. Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church
The Rev. Filomena Servellon Holy Cross/Santa Cruz Episcopal Church
The Rev Dr Renee S. House
Rev. Dr. Joy MacVane, Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church
Khalid Khan, Muslim Association of Ulster County
The Rev. Bob Janis-Dillon, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Catskills
Alexandra Schleuderer, (she/her) Cantorial Soloist, Congregation Emanuel of the Hudson Valley
The Rev. Dr. Faye Banks Taylor, St. Mark's Chapel AME Church
Suzanne Campise, MDiv. Presbyterian Church USA
Jack Sherratt, Rabbinic Intern, Congregation Emanuel of the Hudson Valley
Melanie Wisniewski, Tikun Olam Committee, Congregation Emanuel of the Hudson Valley
The Rev. Paul M. Britton, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Kingston
Margot Jepson, KIC Secretary, Holy Cross/Santa Cruz
Rev. Dr. G. Modele Clarke, Pastor Emeritus, New Progressive Baptist Church
Rev. Evelyn Clarke, New Progressive Baptist Church
Rev. Charles McComb, New Progressive Baptist Church
Pastor James Child, Pointe of Praise, Kingston