

# 2nd Opinion: Gun massacres: Why aren't more churches telling the truth?

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(RNS) — Religion is often mocked for trafficking in delusions. But I believe most religion, and all religion at its best, earnestly seeks to tell the truth about the nature and destiny of man.

Many aspects of this truth-telling speak to Sunday's (Nov. 5) Texas church massacre: fallenness, sin, uncertainty, our innermost longings for hope or redemption, etc.

Theology, perhaps more than any field of human knowledge, is adept at dealing with paradoxes. Mass shootings raise all manner of contradictory arguments about evil, justice and reconciliation.

So why aren't more churches or public faith leaders telling the truth about America's unique scourge of gun violence?

We hear the loudest protests from liberal Protestantism — the fastest-dying segment of American Christianity. Increasingly, the nation's Catholic bishops are speaking with more urgency.

The Most Rev. Daniel DiNardo, cardinal archbishop of Houston and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, [said](#) after the Texas massacre: "We must come to the firm determination that there is a fundamental problem in our society. A Culture of Life cannot tolerate, and must prevent, senseless gun violence in all its forms."

Yet most white evangelicals, who join in a tenuous ecumenism with Roman

Catholics in support of a culture of life, sit out the gun-control debate entirely, if they are not voicing support for the arms manufacturers, dealers and lobbyists.

Ironically, white evangelicals were the victims of Sunday's tragedy.

Texas' attorney general, Ken Paxton, a conservative evangelical, aptly summed up the party line on guns in his statement after the tragedy: "This is going to happen again. I wish some law could fix all of this. All I can say is in Texas at least we have the opportunity to have conceal carry, so ... there's always the opportunity that a gunman will be taken out before he has the opportunity to kill very many people."

One wonders how many of Paxton's co-religionists will be murdered by homegrown domestic terrorists before he is convinced that there is anything we can do as a society besides carry handguns to church on Sundays.

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore, who finds common cause with moderates on some issues, has thus far [resisted](#) considering gun control a pro-life issue.

In a sermonic commentary for The Washington Post, Moore [discussed](#) the Texas massacre in the context of persecution and the enemies of Christ attempting to stamp out his church.

It was beautiful and moving, but totally ignored the question of whether and how Christians should do anything at all to make these tragedies less likely to occur.

Perhaps we will find out that the shooter's motive was to intimidate Christians in particular. But we may find that it was just a senseless act of violence.

Is there really nothing that can be done?

As long as an entire political party and its interest groups remain wedded to the insane idea that no new restrictions on handguns and assault weapons are necessary or permissible, then nothing will change.

So why can't faith groups be leaders in moving us beyond our sick addiction to violence and military-grade weapons?

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The simple truth is that, while no law can prevent a specific mass shooting, commonsense measures can make them less likely overall.

This is not debatable. Truth-telling churches should proclaim this loudest of all!

Christians take the long view. They believe life is eternal. They of all people do not need to worry about being on the right side of history. But they should want to be on the right side of the truth.

[There are things we can do](#) to make these tragedies less commonplace.

How many more schoolchildren, concertgoers, family members and worshippers will be gunned down before we do something?

As long as white evangelicals support the National Rifle Association's death grip on handgun and assault-weapon laws, the rest of American Christianity will not successfully advocate for change.

That's the truth.

*The views expressed in this opinion piece do not necessarily reflect those of Religion News Service or the Baptist Standard. This article originally*

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