



Dear Conference Minister Pastor David Gaewski,
dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The members of the Twelfth Church Synod of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau and the members of the Church Governing Board are deeply shocked and appalled by the murder of 17 persons and more than 15 wounded persons resulting from the killing spree carried out by a 19 year-old former student at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. We mourn the victims together with their relatives and the students and teachers in the school community and express our sympathy to them.

In the last years there have been numerous shooting rampages at schools in the U.S., in large part with dead and injured persons. According to Time Magazine the rampage in Florida was already the fourth gun attack in a school this year with fatalities and injured persons. We are paying close attention to the vigorous protests of thousands of school students in the United States and their demands for more stringent gun laws. The culmination of these protests was the "March for Our Lives" in Washington, D.C. and in many other U.S. cities as well as around the world on March 24, in which hundreds of thousands of persons participated. We recognize that these "Marches for Our Lives" have been supported by the local congregations of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and their ministers. They were represented by a large delegation in Washington, D.C. "The life of every human is precious and valuable and as people of faith we should be honoring that. Jesus lived out that value, withstood state violence on his body and transcended that. And we are to do the same," Pastor Anne Dunlap said in justification of the engagement of the UCC for the actions of the school students.

The UCC carries forward the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was assassinated 50 years ago this April. He dreamed of a society without violence, discrimination, repression and racially motivated attacks. His dream is deeply rooted in the good news of God's love for all peoples. We, the partner church of the New York conference of the UCC, share this hope with you and support your protests against the unrestricted and nearly totally unregulated sale of firearms. We, a church body in the country with the third highest export figures of small weapons, are well aware of our own involvement in the business of death and the responsibility for stronger weapons control laws. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9) – this promise of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is a constant exhortation to us to seek ways of strengthening peacemaking together.

In brotherly/sisterly solidarity

For the Synod and the Church Governing Board



Dr. Ulrich Oelschläger, Synod President



Dr. Dr. h. c. Volker Jung, Church President