Dear colleagues,

I understand that a number of you are planning to wear orange stoles on Sunday, June 5, in recognition of Gun Violence Awareness Sunday and Gun Violence Awareness Day (June 2). As a member of Bishops United Against Gun Violence and a gun owner, I support and encourage you in doing so. While I will likely not be officiating that Sunday because of my sabbatical, I will be wearing orange in solidarity with you.

Awareness that gun violence is epidemic in our nation and society is essential if we are to be creative and self-sacrificing in healing the culture of fear and aggression in which we live. The notion that gun safety regulations infringe upon individual rights is unreasonable. The lack of such regulations compromises everyone's right to live in safety.

This non-partisan witness to the Prince of Peace, who gave his own life that all might be saved, is one way of reminding ourselves and others of the self-sacrifice required of us for all of God’s beloved to be safe. It is a sign of our belief in the God who cares for every one of us as a shepherd does his sheep, and of our commitment to be the voice, hands, and heart of the Shepherd in our own time.

As ever, I am grateful and inspired by your ministry advocacy, reconciliation, and peace.

The Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, Jr.

Bishop of Ohio